

Spirit of the Place

From Mauthausen to MoMA



Besucherzentrum / früher Werkstätten und Baracken der SS

Foto: der SS-Bauhof für den Reichsbauhof, SS-Foto, Ende 1941

An der Stelle des Besucherzentrums und des Vorplatzes befanden sich ursprünglich fünf größere Holzbaracken und drei kleinere Gebäude. Drei dieser 1941/42 errichteten Baracken dienten zunächst als SS-Unterkünfte, die anderen beherbergten die Waffenmeister der SS, die Neubauten, eine Werkstatt, eine Garage und bis Herbst 1944 die Lagerapotheke. Später befand sich hier auch die Kasse der Wirtschaftsverwaltung. Die Bedingungen, unter denen die Häftlinge das Gelände planierten und Gebäude errichteten, waren ähnlich furchtbar und vernichtend wie im Steinbruch. Zu diesen Arbeiten wurden vorwiegend jene Häftlingsgruppen eingeteilt, die der stärksten Verfolgung ausgesetzt waren: 1941/42 waren das vor allem sowjetische, polnische, tschechische, slowakische und jüdische Häftlinge sowie Neugefangene aus dem Quarantänelager. Zwischen der vorderen und der hinteren Barackenreihe befand sich eine Steinmauer, deren Lage und Höhe einer der Baupläne des Strafkampterrains entspricht. Die Granitsteine für diese Mauer, die von sogenannten „Strafkommandos“ aus dem Steinbruch hierher getragen werden mußten und im Original erhalten geblieben. Es sind jene Granitbrocken, die heute vor dem Besucherzentrum aufgelegt sind.

Visitors Centre / Former Workshops and SS Barracks

Continuation of the SS barracks (front row of the barracks, SS photo, late 1941)

On the site of the visitors centre and the grounds in front of it there were originally five large barracks and three smaller buildings. Three of these barracks constructed in 1941/42 first served as living quarters for the SS, the others housed the weapons depot and workshop of the SS, the supervision of construction office, a workshop, a garage and, up to fall of 1944, the camp pharmacy. Later an administrative office in charge of economic activities was also located here. The conditions under which the inmates leveled the grounds and erected the buildings were just as horrible and devastating as those in the quarry. Those groups of inmates assigned for these tasks were primarily those who were exposed to the greatest persecution in 1941/42: it was mainly the Soviet, Polish, Czech, Spanish and Jewish inmates as well as new inmates from the „quarantine camp“. Between the front and back rows of barracks was a supporting wall, the location and height of which corresponded to the facade of the visitors centre. The original granite stones for this wall which so-called „penal units“ carried here from the quarry have been preserved. These are the granite rocks that have been placed in front of the visitors centre.

by Péter György

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Spirit
of the Place

S p i r i t o f t h e P l a c e

F r o m M a u t h a u s e n t o M o M A

by Péter György

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The topography of memory

The spirit of the name
and the place: Auschwitz/Oświęcim,
Ettersberg/Buchenwald, Mauthausen

Goethe's oak tree in Buchenwald

Respect the truth! False news is spread about the concentration camp in Buchenwald; horror stories, we should say. It is high time, I think, to reduce these to a realistic level.

First of all, Buchenwald was not always called so, rather Ettersburg. It was under this name that it became known among the connoisseurs of literary history: Goethe often had his rendezvous with Frau von Stein there, under a beautiful, old oak tree. It is now under so called "law of nature preservation." When they started to clear woodland in Buchenwald, or Ettersburg, so that they can build a kitchen, south and laundry, north of the concentration camp for its inmates, they spared an oak-tree: the oak of Goethe, the oak of Frau von Stein.

The symbolism has never been as tacky as today. It is a piece of cake to write glosses about it. They are handed to us from world history on a plate, right to our homes, to our pens, to our typewriters. For a writer it is a shame to write a gloss about the Third Reich. German oaks, under which Goethe used to sit with Frau von Stein, standing between the kitchen and the laundry of the concentration camp, are only spared thanks to a law of nature preservation. Between the law of nature preservation, which was passed long before those times and the law of anti-nature, which broke out after those years, for instance to speak in the new German tone, between the laundry and the kitchen, stands the protected oak of Frau von Stein and Goethe.

Every day the inmates of the concentration camp walk by this oak tree, i.e., they are walked by it. Yeah. False news is spread about the

concentration camp in Buchenwald; horror stories, we should say. It is high time, I think, to reduce these to a realistic level. As far as I know, until now none of the inmates of the concentration camp got tied to the oak tree, under which Goethe used to sit with Frau von Stein and which—thanks to the law of nature preservation—is still growing, much rather to the other oaks, which this forest is not short of.

Manuscript—with a note by an unknown hand: “The last article before his death, Monday May 22nd, 1939.” Leo Baeck Institute (New York)

Joseph Roth: Die Eiche Goethes in Buchenwald¹

“*Schreiben ohne Macht/Écrire sans pouvoir*”
(*Writing without power*)

Sarah Kofman²

¹ Joseph ROTH, Manuskript—mit dem Zusatz von fremder Hand: “Letzter Artikel von seinem Tode Montag 22. V. 1939.”—im Leo Baeck Institute (New York). In Joseph ROTH, Werke 3.: Das Journalistische Werk 1929–1939. Ed. and postscript by Klaus WESTERMANN. Kippenheuer und Witsch, Cologne, 1991, pp. 945–946.

² Sarah Kofman wrote her study *Paroles suffoquées* (*Smothered Words*) in memory of her father who had died in Auschwitz and dedicated it to Robert Antelme and Maurice Blanchot. She cites Blanchot’s work *L’Entretien Infini* (*The Infinite Conversation*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis and London, 1993, pp. 64–65). Sarah Kofman contemplates Blanchot’s work, and the associations of speech, writing, and language with power in connection with the possibility or impossibility of passing on the experience of the world of concentration camps (and with the commentary on *L’Espèce humaine* [The Human Race] by Robert Antelme). “A sublime book, which commands admiration and respect, which responds to the highest ethical exigency, and whose writing, without power, can make understand the silence of those who could not speak, the “true speech” that is one with the silent presence of the other (*autrui*), prevented from expressing itself in the camps, forbidden, yet also withheld, preserved, protected against all straying, all corruption, against all violent abuse that might have exposed it ... (*Infinite Conversation*, p. 135.)” SARAH KOFMAN, *Smothered Words*. Trans. by Madeleine DOBIE, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1998, pp. 40–41.

The description of the camps—vanishing spaces 1.

Almost minutes after the end of the Second World War, the world media published reports of the horrors that Jewry had had to endure. “The usually genial general Eisenhower shows by his grim aspect his horror of German brutality: the macabre scene of victims murdered by S.S. guards at Ohrdruf camp,” said the caption under the cover photographs of the issue of April 28th, 1945 of the *Illustrated London News*. On the same day, the cover page of the *Kölnischer Kurier* ran the title *Concentration camp—the disgrace is disclosed* (*Die K. Z.-Schande wird enthüllt*). The American edition of *Vogue* printed a photo report by Lee Miller with the title: *Believe it* in June 1945. It was then, in the summer of 1945, after the liberation of the camps, that millions of people living in different corners of the world learnt for the first time from astounding photo reports and news articles appearing in the British, American and French media what had happened in German concentration camps.

From the end of the 1990s onwards a number of studies have shown that various social groups on the winning and on the losing sides alike were motivated—for different reasons—to construct textual and visual narratives attesting the “incredible truth,” the shock of “discovery.”³ In the days and weeks after the liberation of the camps the contemporary public could not avoid becoming an eyewitness: the daily and weekly papers, the reports of news broadcasts reached everyone. But a few years on, a substantial proportion of the pictures that had not been destroyed (those taken in the summer of 1945) were already forgotten.⁴ The small number of survivors had to learn that not long after 1945 only few people remained who were interested in their experiences at the camps or in their escape. The ordeal of the concentration and labour camps was reduced to a painful private problem for those affected—the survivors and their

³ Barbie ZELIZER, *Remembering to Forget. Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1998; *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*. Ed. by Barbie ZELIZER. Athlone, London, 2001; *Catastrophe and Meaning. The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century*. Ed. by Moishe POSTONE–Eric SANTNER. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 2003.

⁴ *Mémoire des Camps. Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis (1933–1999)*. Ed. by Clément CHÉROUX. Marval, Paris, 2001.

families. And those who attempted to endure this as well, found themselves in impenetrable solitude: they attained freedom and nobody cared where they had come from...

Robert Antelme—who had been deported to Gandesheim, a sub-camp of Buchenwald, for his participation in the French Resistance Movement—published his book *L'Espèce humaine* (“The Human Race”) about the impossibility of expressing, conveying these experiences in 1947. It aptly illustrates the seclusion of the book’s reception that the twenty-six year-old Georges Perec begins his book about Antelme with caution: “The literature of the concentration camps does not get attacked. The moment a book speaks of the camps, or even, more generally of Nazism, it’s more or less assured of being everywhere received with certain sympathy.”⁵ Antelme wrote the book driven by the need to tell what cannot be told—this is noted by Perec,⁶ and also by Sarah Kofman in 1987 and Giorgio Agamben in 1998⁷—and decades passed before the message could penetrate contemporary European consciousness (owing a great deal to the German, English, Czech and Dutch translations).

The impossibility to come to terms with the experienced horrors is dramatically highlighted by the suicides of survivor authors. Besides Tadeusz Borowski, Primo Levi and Jean Améry, this—the urge to assimilate, comprehend and make seen—caused the death of Sarah Kofman as well, who was born in 1934 in France as the daughter of an Orthodox Polish rabbi, wrote the story of her childhood ordeal and her escape in 1993 (*Rue Ordener, rue Labat*)⁸ and committed suicide a year later. After the war Kofman attended the Lycée Jules-Ferry and then went on to study philosophy at the École Normale Supérieure; she was a colleague and friend to Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe and a prominent scholar of Freud and Nietzsche. She carried the burden of her secret throughout her life. During the World War she went into hiding with her mother,

⁵ Georges PEREC, Robert Antelme or the Truth of Literature. In PEREC, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. Penguin Books, London, 1997, pp. 255–266.

⁶ “For the returning deportee, to speak, to write, is a need as strong and immediate as it his need for calcium, for sugar, sunlight, meat, sleep and silence. It’s not the case that he can remain silent and forget. He has first of all to remember. He has to explain, to tell, to dominate that world whose victim he was.” Ibid., p. 254.

⁷ Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*. Zone Books, New York, 2002.

⁸ Sarah KOFMAN, *Rue Ordener, rue Labat*. Galilée, Paris, 1994.

both of them were sheltered by a woman called “Mémé.” In the little girl’s eyes all the misery of persecution and Jewishness was embodied by her mother and she turned her love and affection towards the Christian Mémé...

Kofman belongs to a generation different from that of adult survivors: she is a member of the so-called “1.5 generation.”⁹ The term coined by Susan Rubin Suleiman refers to those who were deported to camps or had to flee from persecution as children and subsequently wrote of these experiences. The memoir literature of this “1.5 generation” includes the writings of Georges Perec,¹⁰ Aharon Appelfeld,¹¹ Henri Raczymow¹² and the fabricated autobiography of hoaxer Benjamin Wilkomirski with an unusual life history.¹³

⁹ Susan Rubin SULEIMAN, *The 1.5 Generation. Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust*. In *American Imago*, Vol. 59. No. 3. 2002, pp. 277–295. Two painters belonging to the 1.5 generation should be mentioned here: Frank Auerbach and Gustav Metzger, both of whom fled from Germany as children and now live in Britain. The figure of Auerbach, whose paintings reveal expressive, personal drama, appears in the German edition of W. G. Sebald’s *The Emigrants*, as the hero of the short story *Frank Aurach*. The name was changed in the English and other translations at the request of the painter and none his drawings are included in these. Nevertheless, the story of Auerbach-Aurach—as narrated by Sebald—is closely related to the trauma-drama of survivors. The isolation of the radically left-wing Metzger, who has refused citizenship and wrote the manifesto of Auto-Destructive Art is a similarly significant example of traumatic realism.

¹⁰ Georges PEREC, *W, or the Memory of Childhood*, Godine, Boston, 1988.

¹¹ Aharon APPELFELD, *The Story of a Life: A Memoir*. Schocken, New York, 2005.

¹² Henri RACZYMOW, *Writing the Book of Esther*. Holmes and Meier, New York–London, 1995.

¹³ Benjamin Wilkomirski’s autobiography, *Bruchstücke*, was published in 1995 by Suhrkamp. The text narrating memories of early childhood achieved considerable success, its author was compared to Primo Levi by some critics. Two years later the work turned out to be a fraud, the author had never been in a concentration camp in his childhood, only visited camps as an adult. He was an adopted child; both his biological and his foster parents were Swiss citizens and Christians. The story of the peculiar hero of the learnt trauma was first regarded as the confessions of a crook but some later interpretations saw Bruno Grosjean, aka Wilkomirski, as a victim rather than a crook. Grosjean’s story is reminiscent of the hero of a short story or novel by Sebald. Grosjean undoubtedly recognized one of the genre shaping principles of the time: the opportunities of success lying in public a hunger for authenticity, and he boldly exploited it with his traumatized biography. Cf. Stefan MACHLER, *Der Fall Wilkomirski. Über die Wahrheit einer Biographie*. Pendo, Zurich–Munich, 2000; *Das Wilkomirski-Syndrom. Ein gebildete Erinnerungen oder Von der Sehnsucht, Opfer zu sein*. Ed. by Irene DIEKMANN–Julius SCHOEPS. Pendo, Zurich–Munich, 1997; Blake ESKIN, *A Life in Pieces. The Making and Unmaking of Benjamin Wilkomirski*. W. W. Norton, New York–London, 2002. The American Eskin has the maternal family name of Wilkomirski and has family origins in Riga, where Bruno Grosjean claimed he himself had come from. Eskin’s book also relates a personal drama: the story of the disappointment of the misled Wilkomirski relatives.

This generation includes two prominent Hungarian writers as well. György Kardos G.—who went to Israel from the labour camp at Bor and later returned to Hungary in the Rákosi period—wrote a trilogy (*Seven Days of Avraham Bogatir*; *Where have the Soldiers Gone*, *The End of the Story*) about his experiences of Palestine and Israel. The months spent in the labour camp, the period of vulnerable Jewishness fades behind the images of the new world—as noted by the Israeli writer, Aharon Appelfeld in his memoirs. The novel *Fateless* by Imre Kertész, Nobel laureate writer, relates the months he spent in a concentration camp as a young teenager—and the reception of the novel itself is a good demonstration of the difficulties of coming to terms with, evaluating and “assimilating” the period the novel depicts. Even though for a long time Kertész himself shared the beliefs of those who regarded collective amnesia as self-evident and acceptable, it was his book that brought about a turning point in this respect. (When the novel was first published in 1975 it did not pass unnoticed in Hungarian literary life but its critical acclaim did not break the “consensus” of collective amnesia. This had to wait for a long time.) The cultural life of the Cold War was characterized by the race to gain possession of the long-term future and the convenient coalitions of social groups who had interests in forgetting could only be broken up decades later.

Over the past two decades, however, a new paradigm has emerged. This is related to the transformation of the remembrance culture and sense of historical identity of Germanic societies and to the disappearance of cold war opposition; to the emergence of new canons in the new cultural space. And a feeling of concern mixed with a sense of guilt over the loss of the generation of eyewitnesses has also had its contribution: the events that were mostly regarded as military atrocities in the decades following the war—which was experienced as the age of writing and speaking without power by all those survivors from Antelme to Kofman—are now seen in a different light. Survivors recognized soon after the war that what had happened to them was their own personal tragedy; they could not look to collective solidarity or understanding help in coming to terms with their past, they could at best expect some embarrassed pity; they realised that their contemporaries were not worried by the question of responsibility. This situation has changed over the past twenty years; the

wide-spread use of the term Holocaust and the conventions of its use indicate that the experiences of Jewry have become an integral part of political identity in several countries. In the remembrance and identity policy of the united Germany and Austria of today it is basic practice to face the Third Reich.

It is not only the title of Aleida Assmann's monograph on remembrance policy¹⁴—*The Long Shadow of the Past (Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit, 2006)*—that highlights this turn but also the avant-garde installation from 1997 appearing both on the book's cover and inside showing the Brandenburg Gate with the slogan from over the gate of the camp at Auschwitz, "Arbeit macht frei" ("Work brings freedom"), projected over it by Horst Hoheisel. The transformation of Holocaust monuments into memorial sites¹⁵ and the accompanying changes of meaning—the main subjects of this study—are in close connection with this turn. The turn was identified by Jeffrey Alexander—"On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama."¹⁶

¹⁴ Aleida ASSMANN, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. C. H. Beck, Munich, 2006.

¹⁵ The terminology has shown substantial variation across different cultural and linguistic contexts. The distinction between the English *monument* and *memorial* has been repeatedly noted, among others, by Arthur C. DANTO. Examples include his essay in connection with Maya Lin's *Vietnam Memorial* in Washington: The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. In *The Nation*, August 31, 1985, pp. 152–155; and also his paper on the Holocaust Mahnmahl of Berlin: Mute Point. In *The Nation*, October 17, 2005. The recent trends in the usage of the words "Gedenkstätte" (memorial site), "Gedenkfriedhof" (memorial cemetery), "Gedenktafel" (memorial plaque), "Gedenkstein" (memorial stone), and "Denkstätte" (memorial site), "Denkort" (memorial site), "Begegnungstätte" (meeting place), "Lernort" (learning place), "Mahnmahl" (memorial), "Denkmal" (memorial) are closely related to the tendency to avoid words used at the time of the Third Reich and to the evolution of the perception of the Holocaust. The expressions "Ehrenmal," "Ehrentempel," for instance, have been essentially absent since 1945. In 1934 Troost added two "Ehrentempel" buildings to the Königsplatz of Munich, which was demolished in 1947. See also *Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus. Eine Dokumentation*. Ed. by Ulrike PUVOGEL, Martin STANKOWSKI, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn, 1995; Karen E. TILL, *The New Berlin. Memory, Politics, Place*. University of Minnesota Press, 2005; and Reinhart KOSELLECK, Kriegerdenkmale als Identitätsstiftungen der Überlebenden. In *Identität, Poetik und Hermeneutik*, Vol. 8. Ed. by Odo MARQUARD and Karlheinz STIERLE. Munich, 1979; and War Memorials. Identity Formations of the Survivors. In *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2002, pp. 285–327.

¹⁶ Jeffrey C. ALEXANDER, On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The "Holocaust" from War Crime to Trauma Drama. In *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2002, pp. 5–85.

The phenomenon, however, also had unexpected consequences: the radical re-evaluation led to the globalization of the remembrance culture of the Holocaust in the 1920s. This is what created the situation described by Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider in their study “Memory Unbound. The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory”: the Holocaust has become an event of major significance in the historical period following the era of nation states. “Cosmopolitan memory thus implies some recognition of the history (and the memories) of the ‘Other.’ The heroic narrative of the First Modernity¹⁷ is the narrative of ‘acting perpetrators.’ In contrast, the paradigmatic narrative of Second Modernity becomes the narrative of the ‘non-acting’ victim. In First Modernity this distinction between perpetrator and victim constituted a crucial element for misunderstanding and mutual disdain. In Second Modernity we detect a compromise that is based on the mutual reconciliation...which becomes the central mnemonic event. ... In other words the recognition of the ‘Other’ diffuses the distinction between memories of victims and perpetrators. What remains of a shared past.”¹⁸ Hasko Zimmer¹⁹ raises the problem of the effects the turn in moral judgement had on mnemotechnics as an issue of collective memory.

To some extent it seems natural that the electronification of cosmopolitan memory gave rise to a “new memory” (which is closely related to the process described by John Urry as “the electronification of memory” and which was later termed “new memory” by Andrew Hoskins.²⁰ The virtual cultural space of the global media-space (or in other words: the “always on society”) is truly capable of (irrevocably) disengaging the geographically bound memories, the historical chrono-topos from their original contexts and incorporating them into a new, artificial representational machinery. In this world of “hypervisibility” cultural contexts, genealogies become invisible.

¹⁷ Ulrich BECK, *Risk Society. Toward a New Modernity*. Sage, London, 1992.

¹⁸ Daniel LEVY–Natan SZNAIDER, Memory Unbound, The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory. In: *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2002, p. 103.

¹⁹ Hasko ZIMMER, Kollektives Gedächtnis im Zeitalter der Globalisierung. Gibt es eine postnationale Erinnerungskultur? In *Kolonialismus und Erinnerungskultur. Die Kolonialvergangenheit im kollektiven Gedächtnis der deutschen und niederländischen Einwanderungsgesellschaft*. Ed. by Helma LUTZ–Kathrin GAWARECKI, Niederlande Studien, Waxmann, Münster, 2005, pp. 67–80.

²⁰ Andrew HOSKINS, Signs of the Holocaust. Exhibiting memory in a mediated age. In *Media, Culture and Society*. Vol. 25, No. 1, 2002, pp. 7–22.

“No shadows, no ghosts. In a culture seemingly ruled by technologies of hypervisibility, we are led to believe not only everything can be seen, but also that everything is available and accessible for our consumption.”²¹ The properties characteristic of collective memory, its strong ties to concrete periods and events calling for remembrance—as described by Maurice Halbwachs and by Pierre Nora—no longer have a prominent position in the cultural context of Second Modernity. Up to the period of First Modernity, the majority of cultural rituals and cults had been unimaginable without the spatial grounding of collective memory. The history of nation states, the codes of remembering their wars are uninterpretable without the *moral geography* based on the perceptual and symbolic reality of geographical space. War memorials, which—as was so aptly observed by Reinhard Koselleck—are always made for immortality and are always transient, become visible and interpretable in the cultural space permeated by moral geography²², while they become invisible in the face of the altered system of reference²³ that emerges with the global media space. “The memory of the camps” is simultaneously present in the textual and the virtual spaces of the universal Holocaust culture; the names of the camps are important metaphors filled with meaning for those, too, who never visited these places. Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Mauthausen are perceived as the moral abyss of European history by those, *too*, who “only” read or heard about all that had happened there. These names represent the most elemental issues for their own moral behaviour. We have no reason to call the meaning or the significance of this mediated and textual knowledge into doubt; even less so, if we consider the fact that we have acquired a large pool of “second-hand,” mediated cultural knowledge in the cultural space created by global media. Knowledge asso-

²¹ Avery F. GORDON, *Ghostly Matters. Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, London, 1997, p. 16.

²² D. M. SMITH, *Moral Geographies*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000; James S. DUNCAN–Nancy G. DUNCAN, The Aestheticization of the Politics of Landscape Preservation. In: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 91. No. 2, 2001, pp. 387–409; Robert D. SACK, A Sketch of a Geographic Theory of Morality. In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 89, No. 1, 1999, pp. 26–44.

²³ Bernard LEPETIT, Építészet, földrajz, történelem [Architecture, geography, history]. In *Társadalomtörténet másképp. A francia társadalomtörténet új útjai a kilencvenes években*. [Social history differently: New paths in French social history in the 1990s]. Ed. by Gábor CZOCH–Gábor SONKOLY. Csokonai Új História, Debrecen, 2000.

ciated with a location has been increasingly more independent of knowledge of the location itself since the age of modernity. It has also become clear over the past decades that without the complex virtual-cultural space-association created by the interconnected, forever changing mediatory techniques, the historical events of the immediate past can no longer be understood. At the same time, we have some reason to feel uncertain regarding the practice of virtual space networks created by mediatory techniques.

After all, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau and Mauthausen are not just a few examples taken from the list of camps built by the SS, but are scenes placed in concrete historical spaces, whose remembrance cultures are in close connection with their contexts as nation states and as parts of the Third Reich. The map of the tragically dense network of concentration camps—"their geography of hell"—is also a warning that their micro-environments and micro-historiographies ought to be paid attention. As Sigrid Jacobeit, points out in his lecture, *KZ-Gedenkstätte als nationale Erinnerungsorte. Zwischen Ritualisierung und Musealisierung*: Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, Mauthausen and the other camps are important sites of European *ethnology* and they should accordingly be studied through fieldwork, through the reconstruction of the scene.

Concentration camp memorials are memorial sites, sites for remembrance. They have names, such as the camps of Bergen-Belsen, Buchenwald, Dachau, Flossenbürg, Neuengamme, Ravensbrück, Oranienburg and Sachsenhausen that were erected in German territory; and those which were conceived of as extermination camps and made into reality in German-occupied Poland, such as Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor and Treblinka. From time to time they have no specific situs, no space. Above all of them is written AUSCHWITZ: "Auschwitz—that is a peculiarly non-existent place. One looks for a city with this name on a map today in vain," writes Peter Reichel, "—as a remembrance site and symbol of horror this name has a universal validity..., (is the name, S. J.) a metaphor for the human catastrophe of a previous history." AUSCHWITZ—OŚWIECZIM as a "national memorial site" in Poland? In all the Nazi-occupied countries memorial sites arose from the places of the crimes and exterminations. As in Germany itself, the earlier emergence of the memorial sites, or, respectively, of the commemorative sites, were above all

a result of the engagement and insistence of the survivors. For it was with this that the dilemma began. A “politics of memory” provoked, via the interpretation and meaning of the events in the interests of the present-day states, social groups, and also the former prisoners as well, a conflict over the Nazi past. Commemorative sites, memorials, places of memory—“The speech of remembrance,” pictured, symbolised through verbal statements and expressions, commemorative ceremonies, forms of artistic expression, and the actual structural testimony of the camps, among others. “Since every speech also rests on the remembrance of omissions, the unspoken, on postponements and distortions.”²⁴

The concentration camps and death camps built under the Third Reich are now situated in a single physical–geographical space and at the same time in two, interconnected cultural spaces. On the one hand, their memory is inseparable from their universal mythology and on the other hand—as I see it—it cannot be preserved without the archaeology and topography of the physical–geographical locations where the camps once operated and where their remains still stand today. Auschwitz and Oświęcim, Buchenwald and Weimar, Theresienstadt and Terezin²⁵ can only be understood conjointly, just as the story of Dachau cannot be told without Munich. Also clearly associated are the different layers of the meaning history of Mauthausen and the development of Austria as a state. Since, as is noted by Andrew Charlesworth in his interpretation of Spielberg’s film, *Schindler’s List*: in the context of former concentration camps there lies a major gap between the current state of the original scene, that is, Plaszow in Poland and the representation brought by the late-appearing but globally accessible media space. Spielberg’s Hollywoodish language followed—and reinforced—models of remembrance that can only be upheld in the virtual space of the abstract “Holocaust paradigm.” That is: the cinematic representation of the history of the concentration camp—even beyond Schindler’s story—necessarily

²⁴ Sigrid JACOBETT, KZ-Gedenkstätten als nationale Erinnerungsorte. Zwischen Ritualisierung und Musealisierung. Inaugural speech, November 5, 2002. Humboldt Universität, Berlin, Philosophische Fakultät I., Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Berlin, 2002. <http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/documents/ovl/jacobeit-sigrid-2002-11-05/PDF/Jacobeit.pdf>

²⁵ Jan MUNK, The Terezin Memorial. Its Development and its Visitors. In *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Vol. 17. No. 1, 1998, pp. 3–19.

lacks the reference system of local, in this case Polish, history. It is thus a representation of some kind of diorama, an imaginary view created by the visual apparatus. Spielberg's case—similarly to the aesthetic disaster of Lajos Koltai's film *Fateless*—is a clear demonstration of the profound truth of Giorgio Agamben's observation that there are virtually no eyewitnesses to what happened in Auschwitz, there are only various traces of memory. "But not even the survivor can bear witness completely, can speak his own lacuna. This means that testimony is the disjunction between two impossibilities of bearing witness, it means that language, in order to bear witness, must give way to a non-language in order to show the impossibility of bearing witness. The language of testimony is a language that no longer signifies and that, in not signifying, advances into what is without language, to the point of taking on a different insignificance—that of the complete witness, that of he who by definition cannot bear witness... It is thus necessary that the impossibility of bearing witness, the 'lacuna' that constitutes human language, collapses, giving way to a different impossibility of bearing witness—that which does not have language."²⁶

The aesthesizing dramaturgy, the ethical self-evidence, the visibility of a martyrological oil print, the inescapable distortions used unwillingly by Steven Spielberg and Lajos Koltai—and radically disapproved of by Claude Lanzmann—are the necessary price our age must pay for the paradigm of moral universal trauma, for the absolutization and ahistoricization of the Holocaust. Making a movie of "what happened in the camps" amounts to leading the audience to falsely believe they would after all see "what happened" and would therefore become true witnesses sitting in the cinema, at their television sets or computer screens. In this study I wish to show that in actual fact that which had happened in the concentration camps can only become comprehensible through the *absence* of visual spectacles and reconstructed locations and the irreversibility of this absence may even allow us to live that experience.

The geography, the topography of the real Plaszov is entirely different from that which is presented to the audiences of Spielberg's film.

²⁶ Giorgio AGAMBEN, *Remnants of Auschwitz. The Witness and the Archive*. Zone Books, New York, 2002, p. 29.

The gap between the virtual space and the scene of everyday life appears unbridgeable.

The landscape of Plaszov is thus a palimpsest of local memory.... It is “*not just* a space,” a film set or a memorial site but a “*but a place* ... that has come to have socially endowed and shared meanings for people that...help to shape who they are by virtue of where they are.” Moreover, we must not assume that the locals did not know the history of the site before Spielberg. Some locals have lived in the area since the early 1950s. If you talk to them, they know what the camp was and what happened to parts of the camp after Soviet liberation. Some live in houses that were either accommodation or offices for the Germans, and one house even contained detention cells for the prisoners. They may be reluctant to talk about that, but of other aspects of the camp they talk more freely. The erection of the large socialist monument at the site of the Austrian fort in the 1964 was to commemorate a camp that held Poles and Jews. Its inscription reads in Polish “Those murdered by the Nazi perpetrators of genocide,” a historically more accurate rendering than the 1997 *Atlas of Kraków*, which for the first time declares the monument to be for Jewish victims. Wreath-laying on key days in the Communist calendar would take place there. Local schools would visit the monument as part of the school curriculum that requires schoolchildren to visit a site of martyrology from the period of the German occupation of Poland.²⁷

All those tensions—perhaps between Poles and Jews—that Charlesworth mentions in connection with the use of the memorial sites of concentration camps are very difficult, if not impossible, to resolve in the virtual reality of the global media space and are difficult to comprehend without the patient, careful rereading of the palimpsest of the given location. The situation comes to mind here that developed in connection with Jan Gross’s book, *Neighbors*,²⁸ where a debate con-

²⁷ Andrew CHARLESWORTH, A corner of a foreign field that is forever Spielberg’s. Understanding the moral landscapes of the site of the former KL Plaszov, Krakow, Poland, In *Cultural Geographies*, Vol. 11. No. 3, 2004/July, pp. 307–308.

²⁸ Jan T. GROSS, *Neighbors. The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. Princeton University Press, 2001. Political publicity and the global media representation of the book that caused obvious trauma for the people of present day Jedwabne was *humiliat-*

cerning national politics was, for a while, literally pursued in front of the publicity of the “one-line theatre” of the global media with the participation of the Catholic Church, the state and Polish intellectuals.

If we are to avoid the cultural memory of the Holocaust becoming devoid of aesthetic content—and a situation where “any” creation of art will do as long as it “maintains” collective memory in an effort to the fight amnesia—, we shall have to leave behind for ever the world of the schematic norms of virtual media space with its mythological creations. We must return to the aesthetic and political analysis of the original scenes, which bear witness to so many tensions, to things forgotten and things remembered, to the traumas of the place and its meaning associations, that is, to the historicity of the different moulds of truth. The mapping of the interrelations between aesthetic experience and micro-historiography-geography, the mapping of the archaeology of the spirit of the place becomes increasingly more pressing as the interpretation of the Holocaust as a moral universal trauma is met with more and more conspicuous difficulties. The growing number of Holocaust museums and memorials, whose lack of authenticity—the well-known museum paradox—is closely related to the lack of local contexts, is clearly partly the consequence and partly the cause of this change in perspective. While in the cases of the Jüdisches Museum in Berlin and the Jad Vashem in Jerusalem the authenticity of the memorial policies of the two cities is—for different but deeply related reasons—essentially an issue of the self-identity of society and a system of meta-contexts is given both in the Federal Republic and in Israel, in the United States and Hungary, for instance, the problem must be addressed. In the

ing for them and for the Catholic Church. What was revealed in Gross’s book was in contradiction both with communist martyrology and with the self-image of present day free Poland and compelled the Catholic Church to apologize to the Jewish community in a way that had been unimaginable before. The image of the rural town briefly appearing in the attention of the global media space and the way the global media literally invaded the town did little to help the process of conciliation and overcoming shared grief. As ceremonies were held to seek forgiveness, the media coverage created new traumas and tensions. In my interpretation, the attitude and the rhetoric intent suggested by Gross’s book is a far way from the primarily American media representation of the “story.” I owe thanks to Karolina Szmagałska for allowing me to read her manuscript. C.f. Karolina SZMAGAŁSKA, *The Refusal to Mourn. The Polish debate on the destruction of the Jewish community of Jedwabne*. New School for Social Research, Anthropology Department, New York, manuscript.

United States—as was observed by James Young²⁹ and also noted by several publications in connection with the Americanization of the Holocaust³⁰—museums and memorial sites are much more likely to be related to the contemporary political role of the United States; memorial sites created in virtual spaces always carry some current political context. The Holocaust Exhibition³¹ created as part of the Imperial War Museum in London is special from this point of view: it was placed in a space of historical representations carrying traditional meaning rather than being presented in the context of a neutral, virtual ghetto. The same message was conveyed in Hungary by the slight displacement of the Holocaust Museum in the city space. The memorial site and museum built beside the synagogue in Páva Street will never carry a meaning comparable to the heterotopia and the depressing disorder of the Jewish Museum and synagogue in Dohány Street, within the area of what used to be a ghetto, since the latter carries more authenticity and more truth even in its disorderliness and thoughtless museological organization than the neutral site in Páva Street can ever do. The Holocaust museums and monuments that stand in a location where nothing happened between 1933 and 1945 are inevitably more easily swept into the schematic models of the aesthetic paradigm of the global media space than those which stand at the original scene and do not need to resort to the intensive use of the aesthetics of horror—the effect produced by photographs taken of the liberation of the camps, documents and images of objects that have survived.

2.

In this study I undertake to recover the lessons that the analyses of the local contexts of concentration camps can teach us. These analyses and studies often reflect the tensions that have been engendered over the past decades partly by the paradigm shift described by Jeffrey Alexander and partly by the varying traditions in the use of

²⁹ James E. YOUNG, *The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1993.

³⁰ *The Americanization of the Holocaust*. Ed. by Hilene FLANZBAUM. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore–London, 1999.

³¹ *The Holocaust*. The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, London, 2000.

the notion of cultural heritage. The two historical shifts in interpretation are closely related: it is the classification and institution network of cultural heritage where the identity shifts mirroring the cultural logic of the universal trauma have become overt, thus inescapably entering the sphere of social imagination. That is: the Holocaust—somewhat absurdly—has become part of our world heritage over the past decades.

This has not only—or even primarily—happened at the level of texts; the nature of the interpretation of the camps as *heritage* varied from one scene to another. As Sharon Macdonald writes, “...the dilemma of ‘undesirable heritage,’ a sub-category of what Tunbridge and Ashworth call ‘dissonant heritage.’ Undesirable heritage raises questions about just what continues over time and whether identities can change even if their former physical manifestations remain the same. Undesirable heritage raises questions, may also generate practical dilemmas over whether, for example, physical heritage could be destroyed or altered in order to obliterate an ugly past or to try to shape changing identities.”³² Who were and who have become the *inheritors* of the camps over the past decades? What political or cultural preconditions were needed for someone—other than the modest number of survivors—to regard them as his or her *inheritance*? When and how was the undesirable heritage recognized and in what ways has it been used in Dachau, Buchenwald/Weimar, Auschwitz/Oświęcim, or Mauthausen over the past decades?

The list of determining factors includes the borders being repeatedly redrawn as a result of the changing relation networks of the nation states, by the spread and then the collapse of the Third Reich and finally by the events of 1989. They also include the circumstance that the meaning and significance of nation states have changed in the past sixty years. The contemplation of the different moulds and events of local knowledge suggests that recovering the history of the scenes may provide the way out of the aesthetic trap—the danger of the Holocaust becoming unperceivable and unexperienceable. The remembrance policy that developed over the eighties and nineties—which was universal and decontextualised in line with the abstract norms of the Holocaust heritage—captured the image of the concen-

³² Sharon MACDONALD, Words in Stone? Agency and Identity in a Nazi Landscape. In *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 11. No. 1–2. 2006, p. 112.

tration camps in a kind of timeless “representative moment.” In the course of the past decades there have always emerged images raised to the status of icons which met the expectations of the given period and simultaneously met the expectation of universality as well. The words “camp,” “gas chamber,” “crematorium,” “Appelplatz,” and “liberation” all had their associated familiar and *homely* images and—as Marianne Hirsch noted—their *overuse* led to their neutralization: they lost their documentary values and became pieces fitted into the mythological image network of the universal Holocaust culture. However, the long and complex history of the camps cannot be faithfully captured in a *single* moment—if for no other reason, because the story does not end in 1945 either in a literal sense or from the point of view of remembrance policy. The archaeology and topography of the camps are important because everything that happened in those locations between 1945 and 2006—the abandonment-preservation of the architectural remains, the decay of the ecological environment, the reshaping of musealization practices in accordance with the changes in political norms—inescapably contributes to the process described in the works of Jeffrey Alexander and also Wulf Kansteiner,³³ who criticises Alexander for underestimating the significance of historical consciousness. Between 1945 and the present, the camps have been constant subject to transformation, renovation, demolition and finally various types of reconstruction. The “evaluations” of architectural objects and the material heritage varied as a function of the evolving historical consciousness from seeing objects as worthy of remembrance and memorial—that is, something to be preserved—to ignoring them as remains to be left to sink into the domain of invisible, unacknowledged heritage or as traces to be obliterated. The number, state and ecological and political contexts of architectural objects identifying the camps, monuments or memorial sites of Dachau, Auschwitz, Buchenwald and Mauthausen have been subject to constant change since 1945. The stopovers of the path leading from the undesirable heritage to the universal moral tradition left their marks on the transformations that have taken place since 1945. The local political contexts of the camps, the relationship of the given nation state or region to their memory has had a similarly important

³³ Wulf KANSTEINER, Finding Meaning in Memory. A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies. In *History and Theory*. No. 41, 2002, pp. 179–197.

role. This change can be traced from guilt-ridden marginalization and destruction due to forced forgetting through to the present process of museum development. The meaning of the camps alters as the *temporal separation* grows. The traumatized *societies of the time*, the shamed surviving witnesses, who were eager to forget, are succeeded by new generations, who no longer employ the techniques of cultural remembrance at a historical site. *The silent and desolate scenes which once evoked fear and shame are now seen and apprehended as museological locales.*

Those who visit a former camp will both enter the locale, where monuments, memorials, physical constructions can be seen and get a glimpse of the accumulated tectonic layers of the past shaped by the same ideas—layers that can only be peeled off slowly and with great care. The reconstruction of various kinds of local remembrance history in the locations of the concentration camps both in terms of architecture and urban history and in terms of associated ecological scenery and geographical surroundings has gained increasing importance over the past years. This process has been influenced both by the critique of the aesthetic experiences created by the virtual media space and by local political decisions.

Harold Marcuse's micro-historiographical monograph, *Legacies of Dachau: The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2000*, which summarises the results of many years of research, is one of the first and most outstanding examples of the outcome of a systematic scrutiny of one spot in the social and political space from the vantage point of some point of historical time.³⁴ Marcuse's historical reconstruction literally deconstructs the Dachau image, elements of which repeatedly surface in connection with other camps. There is no one still life, there is no panorama that could be the summary of the long history of Dachau. The visual capturing of a single representative moment, the need for an icon-image has now lost its appeal; it does nothing but serve the schematic norms of aesthetic emptiness. The silhouettes of countless different states are painted on top of one another for the period between the creation and liberation of Dachau and what has happened since 1945 is also an important part of the heritage of the camp. Marcuse surveys the history of the camp estab-

³⁴ Harold MARCUSE, *Legacies of Dachau. The Uses and Abuses of a Concentration Camp, 1933–2000*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

lished after the First World War from 1933 to 1945 and from its liberation to 2001, recounting the history of various rebuilding initiatives and of demolished sections. It becomes increasingly clearer for the reader that the history of the concentration camp is in fact a ruthless mirror that accurately reflects the struggle with the memory of the Third Reich, the decades of the “Vergangenheitsbewältigung,” the degrees of recognition. “Dachau has changed a great deal since its concentration camp days. There are no corpses, no inmates, no dogs, no guards, no living relics at this site. Antiseptic gray with a few touches of green and black predominate. There are no smells—of sweat, excrement, or death, so prominent in the narratives of the liberators—and no sounds except the feet of other tourists treading on the gravel, or perhaps an occasional guide giving explanations to a tour group.”³⁵ At the beginning of the 21st century, when the universal moral trauma of the Holocaust agreed by all has become an established truth, it is difficult to recall the years of the Cold War when the citizens of Dachau could be openly annoyed by the memory of KZ damaging the reputation of their town. Marcuse’s study, *Reshaping Dachau for Visitors 1933–2000*, reconstructs the individual periods in the history of Dachau in accordance with contemporary intentions and the reactions of observers. The period of “Clean Camp” took place between 1933 and 1943: this is the period before the “Endlösung,” when the SS considered it desirable to maintain an appearance *acceptable* for the citizens of the Third Reich and for the international publicity of as yet modest proportions. In a picture report by Franz Bauer published in the 16th July, 1933 issue of the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* with the title *Die Wahrheit Über Dachau*, the victims of the deportations spend their free time weightlifting and swimming. The photographs of the *Illustrierter Beobachter* published in the winter of 1936 show the same inhabitants working in a factory or in a tailoring workshop or sunbathing on the benches by the flowerbeds between the barracks. “The” communist, “the” idler and “the” Jew are conspicuous among the detainees receiving *remedial* training. On 10th February, 1934 the *Illustrated London News* published a three-page photo report on everyday life in Dachau. One of the most notable pictures, besides the hospital and the carpentry workshop, is the photograph of the

³⁵ Ibid., 2001, p. 7.

monument paying tribute to the National Socialist hero Horst Wessel, which, as the text informs us, was built by the prisoners.⁵⁶ The period between 1943 and 1945 is the era of the “Dirty Camp”: the Nazi deception apparatus was now operating at full speed and photographs of the above kind were no longer taken. To use an expression coined by Georges Didi-Huberman, only a few illegal pictures survived from the period of the “Images malgré tout.”⁵⁷ The radical turn came with the public appearance of the picture of the “Genocidal Camp” in 1945 and—as Marcuse notes—this stage did not last long. It was followed by the period of “Cleaning Up” between 1946 and 1955, when the horrendous images which had been on display for a few years after the liberation disappeared from public view more or less to the rhythm of the conversion of Dachau into a camp receiving Germans fleeing from the East by the millions. The fading of memories therefore does not start in abstract space, it is, rather, encouraged by actual uses of different kinds. The local authorities made every effort in the early fifties to bury the past of Dachau between 1933 and 1945 and, as a result, repeatedly got into conflicts with politically influential representatives of various groups of survivors. Writings published in the British and French media denouncing the attitude of the local authorities could seriously inconvenience the German government. In 1955 the policy of marginalization led to the closure of the crematorium, for instance, which had previously been open to the public. As Josef Baumgartner argued in August 1955 on the occasion of a Volkfest, “I was imprisoned by the Nazis myself, thus as a former prisoner I have right to state my opinion. The crimes of unfortunate (unselig) Nazi years cannot be made good again by looking at the crematory, so I take the position: the crematory has to go. At some point we must put an end to the defamation of Dachau region and its populace because it is impossible that... due to an unfortunate past a region can be continually be burdened by the concentration camp crime. (Das KZ –Verbrechen, a euphemistic singular).”⁵⁸

Marcuse goes on with the chronology: the period between 1955 and 1960 brought the beginning of the documentation of the past.

⁵⁶ Ilse ABOUT, *La photographie au service du système concentrationnaire national-socialiste (1933–1945)*. In *Mémoires des Camps*. Ed. by Clément CHÉROUX. Paris, Marval, 2001.

⁵⁷ Georges DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Images malgré tout*. Les Éditions de Minuit, 2003.

⁵⁸ MARCUSE, *Op. cit.*, 2001, p. 185.

Among the documents uncovered by Marcuse the restaurant standing in the place of the former disinfecting barrack deserves special mention. The restaurant that had been operating since the fifties in the camp housing refugees was given the name “At the Crematorium” by his owner in 1961. In 1963 the restaurant was closed down and the building was demolished. Little by little, the original memories, the traces left by history—the architectural objects, the barracks—all disappeared after 1960. The camp turned into an empty, sterile space and monuments raised by various religious groups appeared in its landscaped gardens. “Without historical relics and documents, government authorities could shape the memorial site to embody the impression they wished to convey to visitors.”³⁹ The *present* image of Dachau corresponds to the contemporary interpretation of the memorial site—it does not marginalise the genocide that took place there but evokes the sensation. It is a landscape of emptiness. The political aesthetics of monuments and memorial sites, the new architecture of the spirit of the place has developed over the past few years. It is the forever shifting, transforming impression of the Holocaust visions and conceptions of the different eras that have passed by since 1945. This is when the public archaeological work of the reconstruction of the scene in Dachau and in other camps has taken place and it is now that the period between 1945 and the 21st century is being presented to the public.

The collaborative work of Deborah Dwork and Jan van Pelt also balancing on the border between micro-historiography and geography, *Auschwitz 1270 to the Present*⁴⁰ and Jan van Pelt’s monograph *The Case for Auschwitz*⁴¹ were conceived in this spirit. The latter book contains Pelt’s research findings presented in his testimony in the libel case of David Irving against Deborah Lipstadt. (David Irving questioned the existence of gas chambers, which led Deborah Lipstadt to impeach him for lying—David Irving finally lost the suit.)

³⁹ Harold MARCUSE, Dachau. The Political Aesthetics of Holocaust Memorials. In *Lessons and Legacies III. Memory, Memorialization and Denial*. Ed. by Peter HAYES. Northwestern University Press, 1999, pp. 138–168 and Harold MARCUSE, Reshaping Dachau for Visitors 1933–2000. In *Horror and Human Tragedy Revisited. The Management of Sites of Atrocities for Tourism*. Ed. by Greg ASHWORTH and Rudi HARTMANN. New York, Cognizant Communications, 2005, pp. 118–149.

⁴⁰ Deborah DWORK and Robert JAN VAN PELT, *Auschwitz. 1270 to the Present*. W. W. Norton & Company, New York, London, 1996.

⁴¹ Robert JAN VAN PELT, *The Case for Auschwitz. Evidence from the Irving Trial*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis, 2002.

Dwork and Van Pelt began their work in Auschwitz at the end of the 1980s. They participated in the work of the international committee formed by the Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki in the autumn of 1989, which was commissioned to design the memorial site, the heritage of the camp, as befits the post-communist world. Van Pelt—as is evident from his 1994 essay—builds on the premise that Auschwitz “has become a myth in which the assumed universality of its impact obscures the contingencies of its beginning.”⁴² Van Pelt clearly recognized that in order to touch the historical reality of Auschwitz, he must disavow the universal-mystical interpretation and—in some aspects similarly to Marcuse—reconstruct the history of the site with special reference to its architectural development reflecting its functions. As Van Pelt shows, the architectural solutions of the crematorium buildings are in close connection with the decrease in the economic and political role of Auschwitz in the SS and Himmler’s Germanising and Aryanising programme—it unequivocally functioned as an extermination camp from 1943. “Around mid-July 1942, Himmler acquired the responsibility for German settlement in Russia—an authority that he had covered for more than a year. His view on Auschwitz and his plans for Auschwitz changed rapidly and dramatically. The “Auschwitz Project” was no longer of interest to him. The camp could be used to serve the systematic killing of Jews. Practice became policy. The camp architects got the order to design crematoria equipped from the outset with homicidal gas chambers on August 20, 1942. As Birkenau had become a site for mass murder, all pretence of civility and civilian rules were shed: the Heimat style of Auschwitz I, which characterized by Crematoria 2 and 3, was replaced by the functional vernacular of Birkenau. Crematoria 4 and 5 were to look like simple sheds.”⁴³ The new crematorium designed by Georg Werkmann in 1941 was reminiscent of the Heimat style mentioned by Van Pelt and incorporated unmistakable medieval allusions at the same time, which were also favoured by SS architecture at Mauthausen, Flossenbürg and Wewelsburg and were characteristic of the castle-like buildings in Oldenburg designed by Clemens Klotz. (Both buildings were training

⁴² Robert JAN VAN PELT, *Auschwitz: From Architect’s Promise to Inmate’s Perdition*. In *Modernism / Modernity*, Vol. 1, No 1. 1994, pp. 80–120.

⁴³ JAN VAN PELT, *The Case for Auschwitz*, p. 80.

centres.) The geographer Andrew Charlesworth goes even further than Van Pelt in demystifying Auschwitz and excavating the spirit of the site. He endeavours to reconstruct the ecological landscape as well in a series of studies co-authored with other scholars. The appearance of the moral geographical perspective in the analysis of the memorial sites adds a new temporal and spatial dimension to the reconstruction space. "This paper explores the construction of moral geographies in the particular context of the Polish town of Oświęcim. This small town in southern Poland with its 42,000 inhabitants, its ice hockey team and its chemical plant, may not immediately seem familiar, yet it is a site where numerous complex and conflictual representations come into play at the hands of a wide range of institutions, communities, states, multinational corporations, media organisations and individuals at a variety of scales. Oświęcim is the site of the former concentration and death camp complex, Auschwitz. This locational connection has meant that, for many within and beyond Poland, the lived place of Oświęcim has become lost, its geography ignored and uprooted."⁴⁴ The dual names reflect the different functions, as has been manifest in the many conflicts of the past decades, from the construction of the Carmelite monastery through to the so-called supermarket dispute and the erection of the Cross and the Star of David within the area of Birkenau and beside it. There are people who have lived in the Polish town of Oświęcim sometime during the past decades and used its space accordingly and there are people who have primarily or exclusively seen Auschwitz in the same location, created as part of the programme to materialise German ethnic superiority during the era of the Third Reich. The representation of Auschwitz in the global media space undoubtedly played a role in the collisions between the two names and the two uses of the space. If we recall the debates concerning the area of the concentration camp, it is apparent that the "outside world," the onlookers who are the beneficiaries of the universal myth conception, did not realise that the debate was about something happening not only in Auschwitz but also in Oświęcim, which had become invisible to them. What once

⁴⁴ Andrew CHARLESWORTH, Alison STENNING, Robert GUZIK, Michal PASZKOWSKI, 'Out of Place' in Auschwitz? Contested Development in Post-War and Post-Socialist Oświęcim. In *Ethic, Place and Environment*. Vol. 9. No. 2. June, 2006, pp. 149–150. I would like to thank Andrew Charlesworth for making this essay available to me.

happened in Auschwitz now casts its long shadow over Oświęcim, a town little known anywhere but in Poland. At the same time, the symbolic power of Auschwitz silences parts of the camp of Birkenau: the site of the *Endlösung*, the systematic extermination of Jewry. Those who have been to Oświęcim and have also visited Auschwitz and Birkenau know that there is a dramatic difference between narratives and photographs on the one hand and personal experience on the other. They also know how difficult it is to find a balance, to reveal the links between the two kinds of knowledge. The visitor who embarks on a journey to Auschwitz/Birkenau and arrives in Oświęcim will be aware of the scarcity of signposts; interestingly, it is this economical use of signs that draws attention to the social reality of the present town—beyond the sight of the built in environment. The road leading from Auschwitz to Birkenau passes by the town; the meaning its inhabitants attach to the memory of the concentration camp is undoubtedly different from its meaning for the “pilgrims.”

The Auschwitz situated in global media space has become the metaphor of an era; its acknowledgement or even partial denial amounts, respectively, to identification with the condemnation of Nazism or the radical disregard of current European moral values. Visiting the former camp in Oświęcim—the camp which was partially reconstructed and renovated and eventually left to ruins—is a personal experience, more forceful and more compelling than the recital of rhetorical phrases. The present state of the concentration camp becomes meaningful as part of the cultural history of the original scenes. The political and cultural heritage of Auschwitz may only become a personal experience if the visitor faces the ruins standing in the area of Oświęcim, recovers their archaeological interrelations and interprets the architectural remains in the context of moral geography. The greater part of the vast territory of Birkenau is in ruins; the traces of individual barracks can be identified, the entire camp can be surveyed in one glance: the visitor is met with an expansive and empty horizon. The hundreds of thousands of people once exterminated here never saw the camp *as a whole*.

The *name* of the place is inseparable from its *spirit* in the case of Auschwitz/Oświęcim and especially so in the case of Buchenwald. The concentration camp built in 1937 near Weimar was originally called “Ettersberg Konzentrationslager,” as suggested by its geographical location. The name of Ettersberg, however, evoked *another*



Birkenau

Photo: János Kende, 2008

spirit: that of Goethe. This hill is a walking place for the inhabitants of Weimar, which was also visited by Goethe, who plays a fundamental role in the town's sense of identity. An important local tradition was trespassed when Goethe's oak became enclosed within the camp—an event that was too painful for Joseph Roth in his emigration. The National Socialists of Weimar made two pledges in their efforts to alleviate their embarrassment: first, they secured the intensive presence of the SS in Weimar (that is, a labour camp that would encourage the economic progress of the area) and second, they wanted to integrate the spirit of Goethe into the history of their own Weimar, effectively positioning Goethe in Nazi historical mythology. The local Nazi organization wanted the camp to have a different name. On 28th July, 1937 Himmler himself gave it a new name “christening” it Buchenwald after the surrounding woods. The story of the camp's name is documented by a former occupant, Jorge Semprun as well:

However, the first official name of the camp, K.L. Ettersberg, created something of a stir. In a letter to Himmler dated July 24, 1937, Theodor Eicke mentioned that the National Socialist Cultural Association of Weimar had protested against this name, “for the name of the Ettersberg is associated with the life and works of Goethe” and invoking his spirit in the name of a re-education camp (Umschulungslager) in which the dregs of the earth would be assembled, could only sully the poet's memory. Nor was it possible, Eicke pointed out, to name the camp after the nearest village, Hottelstedt, for this would result in considerable financial loss to the SS of the garrison, since their accommodation allowances would then be calculated in conformance with the cost-of-living index at Hottelstedt, as specified in the regulations, whereas a standard of living based on the higher prices prevailing in Weimar would be more in keeping with the dignity of the SS. For that reason Eicke suggested calling the camp K.L. Hochwald. Four days later, Himmler announced his decision. The camp would be called K.L. Buchenwald/Weimar. In this way the cultural susceptibilities of the local burghers would not be hurt and the SS personnel would get accommodation allowances in keeping with their social role.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Jorge SEMPRUN, *What a Beautiful Sunday*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1982, pp. 16–17.



Birkenau

Photo: János Kende, 2008



Birkenau

Photo: János Kende, 2008

That is the story of the common noun “beech wood” becoming a proper name, which then entered the history of Germany and contemporary European consciousness as a place of disgrace, since it is one of the prominent spots of the National Socialist map. Buchenwald was not marked on German maps until July 1937 and it still only exists today in this one context. The castle and the woods surrounding the camp are still called Ettersberg and they continue to play an important role in the cultural and political life of Weimar, which still places a strong emphasis on its Goethe-Zeit tradition. The Buchenwald Gedenkstätte is situated in the middle of the forest. What Buchenwald was between 1937 and 1945 and then between 1945 and 1950, no longer exists today and in terms of the conceptual network of historical geography it never did exist in the past. Buchenwald was *only* a camp, there in the woods of Ettersberg. After its closure it became a place name again, one of the metaphors of hell on Earth. Fifty thousand people died in Buchenwald and those who survived maintained until the end of their lives that they had been *there*. National Socialism created a geographical name and place that had literary ceased to exist by the time it became known to the world. Buchenwald operated with its dual meaning of an imagined and a real place until 1950, when the Soviet Special Camp was closed. Thousands more lost their lives in the same woods during the operation of the Soviet camp. The truth about their unmarked graves took a long time to come to light and re-enter German and European memory—after 1989 only. Over the past decade and a half the dark shadow of Buchenwald has received attention in a number of arts events with the historicization of the memorial and remembrance policy established by the German Democratic Republic. The exhibition organised by Marie Louise Plessen under the title *Walking through time in Weimar, Weaving between Goethe’s home and Buchenwald* took place in 1999 as part of the Goethe Year and the programme series of “Weimar, cultural capital” and consisted in a display of Goethe’s drawings at the location of the former camp. According to a report in the *New York Times* the exhibition created some tension between the local population and Volkhard Knigge of Cologne, the recently nominated director of Buchenwald Gedenkstätte. “In the Ideology of the Nazis, Buchenwald was a cultural project that belonged in Weimar” said Knigge, the director of the camp memorial. “Its purpose was to root out all that was unworthy, all that was seen



Weimar/Buchenwald

Photo: Livia Páldi, 2005



Weimar/Buchenwald

Photo: Livia Páldi, 2005

as cancerous, from German society, so that the Volk could be united and at one in its genius.”⁴⁶

1999 was the year of another event, the display—among other historical—conceptual works—of the work *Künstlers Traum: Goethe in Buchenwald* by Hamburg artist Jochen Gerz, who is best known for his “vanishing” Holocaust monument. “In linking the two biggest paradoxes of German history, Gerz drew a portrait of the city, which is at the same time the berth of German modernism (the Bauhaus and the Weimar Republic), and a center of the National-Socialist movement. The work was aimed at the residents of Weimar who, after the end of the Third Reich, lived through forty years of state communism, and their desire to come to grips with the city’s conflicting pasts. The billboards told the ‘true’ story of Weimar commissioning a work to the artist Gerz, in order to free the city from Buchenwald’s overwhelming shadow. Can one play with the truth? Real names in the story made it difficult to say where fiction began and where reality ended. For seven months, the commercial billboards played in Weimar’s historical center with the city’s past: real persons, as the acting mayor, prominent citizens, as well as several politicians speak out, and debate freely the history of Europe’s cultural capital.”⁴⁷ The exhibition in an urban setting of the unity, the equivalence of Weimar and Buchenwald, which was taken for a fact during the era of National Socialism and vehemently denied at the time of state socialism, is reminiscent of Gerz’s monument in Hamburg with respect both to the use of temporariness and to the technique of communication. In both cases, the radical critique of the 19th century tradition of Denkmalkultur and the creative exploitation of the fusion of urban space and media space are notable features. Finally, the conceptual work of Rebecca Horn, who is a cosmopolitan artist similarly to Gerz, was also displayed in 1999 with the title *Concert for Buchenwald*. The subject of the work is, once again, the connections between Weimar culture and Buchenwald.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁶ Roger COHEN, As Goethe’s City is Honored, Buchenwald Lurks Nearby. In *New York Times*, 1999. August 5.

⁴⁷ <http://www.gerz.fr/> (18 October, 2006) The work that was first put on display in 1999, was also exhibited in Istanbul in 2006 under the directions of curator Stephen Wright in the exhibition entitled *Rumour as Media*.

⁴⁸ Rebecca HORN, *Concert for Buchenwald*. Scalo Publishers, 2000. “*Concert for Buchenwald* consists of two stunning installations that use sound, motion, and light to dramatic effect.

depth of the question, raised by Knigge as well, of the significance attributed to Buchenwald by the SS, is indicated by the existence and architecture of the zoological park and the buildings in the SS Falcon Court (Falke Hof). In May 1938 following his "tour" of Buchenwald, Himmler ordered the construction of the SS Falcon Court. "In accordance with hunting customs and practices dating back to the Middle Ages, animal enclosures were constructed in the same year. Two eagle houses and seven cages were set up by the end of the year. A house with fireplace was built in order to accommodate the hunters. The SS Falcon Court was completed in 1940 and it was open to the public at least by the month of May of that year. The revenue earned by the levy of admission fees amounted to 600 Reichsmark between May 1940 and December 1941."⁴⁹

Carl Otto Koch, the commandant of Buchenwald between 1937 and 1941, created the zoological garden in the immediate neighbourhood of the crematorium *as part of the everyday culture* of Buchenwald. Koch's directives dated 8th September, 1938, ordering the protection of deer in the zoo, is a document that sheds light on the social reality of the SS concept of the early stages of the camps.⁵⁰ It is possible that the name of the camp disturbed the Goethe cult of Weimar National Socialists but the *existence* of the camp did not bother anyone around Weimar in 1937. The zoo and the building housing and protecting various birds of prey and the local hunters is

The first, set in an abandoned tram depot, contains layers of ash pressed behind walls of glass, a wagon from Buchenwald that runs back and forth on a track, and stacks of smashed and silenced violins, cellos, guitars, and mandolins. Part two occupies an eighteenth-century castle, Schloss Ettersburg, and it contains suspended beehives (replete with buzzing bees), mirrors broken and whole, and a cello that plays itself with two bows. Arresting and mysterious, Horn's memorial encompasses the stark horror and infinite sorrow of the Holocaust with exquisite sensitivity. Critics Boris Groys and Martin Mosebach describe the spirit and dynamics of the piece, and Doris von Drathen insightfully discusses Horn's politically and historically conscious oeuvre as a whole, thus deepening readers' responses to the photographs of these remarkable works of compassion and engagement." Donna Searnan

⁴⁹ H. STEIN-S. STEIN, *Buchenwald, A Tour of the Memorial Site*. Weimar-Buchenwald, 1993, p. 61. The architecture of the building that stood until 1945 fits the trend of SS architecture discussed in detail in connection with Mauthausen in that it follows the rural, parochial Heimat style and imitates romantic medieval features.

⁵⁰ "...Furthermore it has been found that deer have been lured to the fence and tinfoil put in the mouth. In the future, I will find out the perpetrators of such loutish acts and have them reported to the SS Commander in Chief in order to have them punished for cruelty to animals." The Camp Commandant of Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Signed by Koch SS Standartenführer. In H. STEIN-S. STEIN, Op. cit., p. 23.

a clear demonstration that the fact and the workings of the KZ were far from being a *secret*.

In 1945, a few days after the liberation of Buchenwald, German communist prisoners and the members of the Haftingslagerkomitee (Prisoner Committee) appointed by them decided the erection of a monument on the grounds of the camp with the intention to preserve the memory of comrades who had lost their lives in the fight against fascism, the memory of fifty thousand victims. The wooden obelisk erected within the gates of the camp not far from the entrance remained in place for about two weeks. This monument also formed part of the celebrations held on 19th April and 1st May.⁵¹ It was clear from the moment of the liberation of the camp that the different incarnations of remembrance, the planned monuments also have a retrospective effect on the meaning of the camp's history. A prisoner of Buchenwald, the German Jewish Werner A. Beckert, for instance, wished to place the "Buchenwald Ehrenmal" remembering all victims of the camp regardless of national identity in the vicinity of the graves of Goethe and Schiller in the Weimar cemetery. The temporary obelisk and Beckert's design are both solutions harmonizing with the tradition of cemetery remembrance culture, which was, however, unacceptable for the communists in 1946. For the surviving political prisoners, remembrance did not primarily constitute a cultural practice mediated by the cemetery, it did not simply signify grief and melancholy felt over their irreparable loss but formed a component part of the political fight ahead of them: their objective was to erect a public monument in Weimar.

The steps taken in the interest of commemorating the camp overlapped in time with the transformation of Buchenwald: its grounds were taken over by the Soviet Special Lager soon after its liberation. The immediate surroundings of the camp were also under constant modification: the graves of German prisoners who died in the Soviet camp pervaded the forest of Ettersberg after 1945.⁵² Somewhat earlier, the same forest had become the final resting place—the mass

⁵¹ Volkhard KNIGGE, Opfer, Tat, Aufstieg. Vom Konzentrationslager Buchenwald zur Nationalen Mahn-und Gedenkstätte der DDR. In *Versteinertes Gedenken. Das Buchenwalder Mahnmahl von 1958*. Vol. 2. Ed. by Volkhard KNIGGE, Jürgen Maria PIETSCH, Thomas A. SEIDEL. Spröda, 1997, pp. 7–11.

⁵² Sarah FARMER, Symbols that Face TwoWays. Commemorating the Victims of Nazism and Stalinism at Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen. In *Representations* No. 49. 1995/Winter, pp. 97–119; and Maoz AZARYAHU, RePlacing Memory. The Reorientation of Buchenwald. In *Cultural Geographies*. Vol. 10, No. 1. 2003, pp. 1–20.

grave—for 2900 Jews who could not be killed in gas chambers and were buried instead beside one of the cultural memorial sites and tourist attractions of Ettersberg, the early 20th-century Bismarckturm. The inmates who died during the days of the liberation were also buried here. The traces of the burials sanctioned by the American and Soviet authorities were disappearing by 1946. In 1947 the Soviet military leadership decided to obliterate the cemeteries in the neighbourhood of the Bismarck memorial. Even so, the Bismarckturm became an important site of commemoration: it was the location of memorial celebrations organised by former political prisoners in 1947 and 1948. The development of the memorial sites of both the Bismarckturm and its wider surroundings, Ettersberg, is in close connection with the budding Cold War, with the emergence of the identity policies of the two German states. The unrealised ideas reveal how former prisoners were barred from decisions of remembrance policy concerning their own past. The Social Democrat Ernst Thape's manuscript *Denkmal der unbekannten Opfer des Faschismus*, which was written in 1947 and cited by Volkhard Knigge, provides a faithful illustration of the dilemma over the development of the memorial site, which eventually led to the disassembly of the Bismarckturm in 1949 with the active participation of Erich Honecker, and to the construction of the *Grabtrichter Memento* in its place. Thape believes that the Bismarckturm belonged to a bygone era; its place needs to be taken by a new, supra-national monument which is not darkened by the shadow of the history of German imperialism. The *ahistorical internationalism* of former prisoners did not fit the political objectives of the German Democratic Republic. The Grabtrichter Memento commemorating the mass graves of 1945—with the subscription "Memento" on its base—is a piece of the "Ehrenhain," the memorial for nameless heroes built to replace the Bismarckturm. In 1955—in close connection with the development of the Gedenkstätte, which played a crucial role in the remembrance policy of the GDR—the mass graves were transferred. At the beginning of the 1990s a list of the people buried under the Bismarckturm written by a former Polish inmate of Buchenwald was discovered in the "*Archive of the Main Commission for the Persecution of Crimes against Poles*" in Warsaw. As a result, the image of the forest changed once again in the past few years: a cemetery with the names of the victims can now be seen in place of the tower and the Memento.

After 1950, following the closure of Special Lager No. 2 of Soviet administration, the radical steps taken by the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany opened a new period in the history of Buchenwald. The buildings on the camp grounds were systematically demolished between 1952 and 1954—with the exception of the crematorium, the original entrance, the clock tower and the museum building of the Nazi era. The visitor today may wander around the grounds of the camp searching for the lost spirit of the place among the ruins and remains, the recently rebuilt buildings and the museum of the Soviet camp. What is worse, the “Nationale Mahn und Gedenkstätte, Der Ehrenhain” (completed in 1958) in the Ettersberg woods has become a “sacred site” of crucial significance in the political identity culture and mythology of the GDR: that is how Buchenwald ended up in Ettersberg and how a new association came to be coined between the now historical name chosen by Himmler and the geographical place. Ettersberg may be referred to without Buchenwald, and this is what happens on the pages of literary and cultural history and in everyday life today, for instance in advertisements targeting the Jugendgastehaus “Am Ettersberg.” The Buchenwald Gedenkstätte, this monumental architectural and landscaping work incorporated or rather, absorbed the relics of previous memorial sites and their memories with them for a long time to come. The target site of pilgrimage was no longer the scene but the monument; the compound standing in the depth of the forest did not commemorate the grief but the victorious resistance.

The visitor enters the grounds of Gedenkstätte between the pillars of a grey granite gate and leaves it via the same route. This gate—a construction which evokes the atmosphere of Egyptian burial chambers and Doric columns at the same time and which keeps a noticeable distance from the monumental buildings created by Speer or Troost for the Third Reich—demarcates the space of the memorial; this is where the path leading from captivity to freedom begins. The stairway leading down a slope is lined by sculptural reliefs depicting the history of the camp and its seven symbolic years. The textual versions of the pictorial representations can be read on the backs of the stone tablets; the texts were written by Johannes R. Becher. In the lower part of the memorial the visitor comes to an empty space surrounded by walls: a borrow-pit grave (*Grabtrichter*). This almost completely closed ring is the deepest point of the remembrance process, this is where the descending pilgrim reaches the space

of lost hopes. The combined experience of the enclosed and empty space, the architecture and landscaping, the stone and vegetation, the lights and shadows makes a powerful impression even if the visitors is fully aware that this is not the actual scene but its neighbourhood only. The gate leading to the space of the unmarked depression is a variation on the “triumphal arch” of the main entrance. If a fragment of the monument may bear independent meaning in the 21st century—a spot where the spatial experience is almost entirely detached from the totality of the perception creating the monument of the national memorials of the GDR—then this ring shaped structure is that fragment. And similarly to the gate demarcating the boundary of the memorial, this construction also “shows an awareness” of the architecture of the Third Reich with its use of Roman traits and expresses a critique of it. It is not primarily through the chosen historical eclectic arrangement; the stylistic elements emphatically allude to the tradition of congruity between monument and monumentality typical of the Third Reich, to the spaces which were created with the partial remodelling of Berlin and Nuremberg as representations of the masses. In this enclosed and empty space it is not the masses stripped of their individuality who meet their leaders that we see but the ghosts of the masses stripped of their lives. In so far as the architecture of the Third Reich frequently alludes to necro-polises, this memorial gives the appropriate response. The complete lack of all kinds of symbolic gesture or sign is another important feature—and a message to the recent past. The monumental spaces of the Third Reich were evidently governed by the iconography of the Third Reich. This space has no historical iconography of any kind. The moment of the empty space, however, is just a fragment of the memorial.

The next section displays the columns of the states participating in the commemoration. The eighteen columns of the *Straße der Nationen* represent the countries which participated in World War II, the victorious opponents of the Third Reich: national memory is preserved here in conformity with the mythology of collective anti-fascism. The depression of the mass graves of 1944–45 is as harrowingly empty and this empty space is as much above politics, as the “Avenue of the Nations” is vacant, devoid of meaning and deserted. The monumentality-hunger of the Third Reich and of state Socialism meet and rival one other. Beyond the memorial columns the visitor comes to a borrow-pit grave once again; from here, another stairway leads

up to the *Tower of Freedom*, the Fritz Cremer memorial restored in 2005. The work of Fritz Cremer, who sought, among others, Brecht's advice, presumably meant something different back in the relation network of the political and cultural cold war, in the context of its political and aesthetic norms, than it does after 1989, when the state that created it belongs to history as much as the Third Reich does. Prior to 1989 the monument represented the victory of communism over Nazism both through its architecture and through its sculptures. "Cremer's structure of the group of figures as a staggered arrangement of postures and consciousness types follows, on the one hand, the principals of Brechtian examples—the plastic can be seen as constructed on the determining pedagogical moment constructed and what was for Brecht an attentive political figurative theatre—and almost, on the other hand, the expressed intention of the landscape characteristic and architectonic measures are again figuratively combined."⁵³ The old monument—similarly to the national monuments erected in Mauthausen—has been historicized, it is now seen in a new context, between inverted commas, reflecting the disappearance of the state that created it. (As if we were experiencing a paraphrase of the Reinhart Koselleck thesis. The German historian shows that there is a major contradiction between the intention and the effect of the creation of war memorials. While they were most often intended to commemorate victory rather than the historical inescapability and timeless endurance of bereavement, the effect was invariably one of historicising the pathos of permanence. "More than anything else, memorials erected permanently testify to transitoriness."⁵⁴ Triumph, just as grief, can give rise to communities of remembrance, which may eventually also become part of the distant past.) The work entitled *Kein Ort*, a collection of photographs taken by Jürgen M. Pietsch in 1997 of the memorial⁵⁵ is an important visual document of this shift in perception and context. The photographs showing individual details of the monument in bright light, with no visitors in view, provide a faithful portrait of the horror vacui that today's visitor will

⁵³ KNIGGE, Op. cit., 1997, p. 76.

⁵⁴ Reinhart KOSSELCK, War Memorials. In *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, p. 288.

⁵⁵ Jürgen M. PIETSCH, *Kein ort*. In *Versteinertes Gedenken. Das Buchenwalder Mahnmahl von 1958*. Vol. 2. Ed. by Volkhard KNIGGE, Jürgen Maria PIETSCH, Thomas A. SEIDEL. Spröda, 1997, pp. 15–87.

apprehend. The architectural components suddenly take a new interpretation in this “hiatus”: the Tower of Freedom seems to evoke the watchtower of the camp in Flossenbürg.

I visited Buchenwald in 2004. I followed the signposted path in the bright sunshine of early summer, up the stairs to the tower and the sculptures. The memorial has become *a relic of the past*, its historical significance as a site of remembrance has melted away and the abstract context of the history of art and architecture is not yet perceptible here. And as the original meaning of the monument lost its content, the work re-emerged as a memorial site: the camp which had been neglected before now suddenly became the target of grieving visitors. The message of a monument of the German Democratic Republic became a historical treasure; the Gedenkstätte left the dimensions of political aesthetics behind and was reborn as a document of art history. This ever changing perspective is an important characteristic of the political aesthetics of the concentration camps: the changeability of different architectural and conceptual forms. Monuments turn into memorial sites, the scene is revealed through the emergence of suppressed contents, grief receives prominence and experience uncovers the time-boundedness of national existence, the melancholy of resistance, the ephemerality of victory and triumph, the kaleidoscope of political uses. The remains of the concentration camp, the present architectural and geographical environment are an unintentional mirror of the state and use of memory.

Mauthausen, Flossenbürg, Wewelsburg—the aesthetics of the SS

Certain elements of the buildings of Dachau, Buchenwald and Auschwitz display *those principles of architectural aesthetics* of the SS which strongly determine the character of Flossenbürg and, even more so, of Mauthausen. The self same architectural principles played a fundamental role in constructing the castle of Wewelsburg,⁵⁶ which was transformed into an SS training camp on Himmler’s orders, the

⁵⁶ Karl HÜSER—Wulff E. BREBECK, *Wewelsburg 1933–1945. Kult- und Terrorstätte der SS. Eine Dokumentation*. Bonifatius, Paderborn, 1987.

Ordensburg Vogelsang designed by Clemens Klotz,⁵⁷ the Schulungslager building of Robert Ley's Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF) and parts of the Reichsparteitagsgelände⁵⁸ in Nuremberg. In studies on the architectural traditions of National Socialism the emphasis has in the past decades fallen on partially materialised buildings, on intact or fragmented remnants in cities and on various construction plans. That is, the work of Troost and Speer, and Ludwig Ruff, and the monumental plans of the transformation of Berlin, Munich and Nuremberg have been in primary focus. The monographs of Barbara Miller Lane⁵⁹ and Alex Scobie⁶⁰ have made it clear that architecture had special significance in Nazi ideology, presumably due in part to Hitler's personal preferences. Large scale and radical architectural reconstructions were initiated at the time of the Third Reich, the aspired everlastingness of National Socialism was unmistakably radiated by the new landscapes of roads, bridges and cities and especially by the megalomaniac urban designs. If Chris Tilley⁶¹ is correct in that the landscape is where social identities are uncovered and become visible, the industrial and architectural landscape created by the National Socialist state would undoubtedly exert a dramatic influence on everyone who knew Germany before 1933; and, in a different way, it became ineludible for those growing up in this visual hierarchy. Hitler's political doctrine intent on erasing the individual and recognising nothing but the masses, race, obedience and the leader was translated word by word to all the languages of visibility and spatial design that modern technology could offer, including architecture. "Architecture is not merely speech rendered in stone, it is also the expression of a community's belief and convictions, or else it expresses the power, magnitude and glory of a personality, of a ruler...", remarked Hitler, as quoted by Alex Scobie.⁶² And indeed: the

⁵⁷ Franz A. HEINEN, *Vogelsang. Von der NS Ordensburg zum Truppenübungsplatz in der Eifel*. Helios, Aachen, 2005.

⁵⁸ Alexander SCHMIDT, Bernd WINSHEIMER, Clemens WACHTER and Thomas HEYDEN, *Geländebegehung. Das Reichsparteitagsgelände in Nürnberg*. Sandberg, Nuremberg, 2002.

⁵⁹ Barbara MILLER LANE, *Architecture and Politics in Germany 1918–1945*. Harvard University Press, Boston, 1985.

⁶⁰ Alex SCOBIE, *Hitler's State Architecture. The Impact of Classical Antiquity*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1990.

⁶¹ Chris TILLEY, *The Materiality of Stone. Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology*. Berg, Oxford, 2004.

⁶² Alex SCOBIE, Op. cit., p. 40. (Cf. Hermann GIESLER, *Ein anderer Hitler. Bericht seines Architekten Hermann Giesler. Erlebnisse, Gespräche, Reflexionen*. Druffel Verlag, Leoni am

“communal” architecture created by the Third Reich reiterated the lesson of the ecstatic happiness of submission, the freedom given by the unity of the crowd and the unequal communication of the chosen leader in a wide variety of shapes and locations. The “Versammlung-sarchitektur,” the monumental and transparent spatial arrangement envisioned for the transformation of Nuremberg above all, would have offered and created the landscape of the ecstasy of individual dematerialisation, the festivities of the Parteitag.

The designs for rebuilding Munich, Berlin and Nuremberg, the completed and partially preserved buildings are an accurate indication of the—sometimes incompatible—diversity of National Socialist powers reigning over social and political spaces and of the ruthless deliberation with which the political weapon of the transformation of urban spaces was used and abused. This architecture had to comply with a number of ideological expectations: the (designs of) restructuring of urban spaces principally followed Roman precursors and served a political objective as well: the representation of the architectural norms of anti-urbanism. In Munich, for instance, the architects of National Socialism employed the technique of overwriting inherited urban spaces in rebuilding Königsplatz and its surroundings.⁶³ Berlin—a Jewish, enigmatic cosmopolitan city emanating the atmosphere of the Weimar Republic so detested by Hitler—would have almost disappeared in its original form as instructed by Speer’s designs. It would have not only lost its name but—as the victorious city of the Third Reich, Germania—would have had its structure, divisions and scaling radically altered. In Nuremberg, the city of “Versammlungsarchitektur,” medieval, archaic elements were to be introduced in the town centre and the buildings of the imperial Nazi party rally grounds (the “Reichsparteitagsgelände”) were designed and some of them built. The 14 square kilometre complex of the

Starnberger See, 1978. Beside Speer, Giesler was one of Hitler’s favourite architects. He worked on plans transforming Munich and later Linz, among other cities, and also designed the unfinished Gauforum in Weimar. In connection with the “Sprache in Stein” or “Words in Stone” expression see: Sharon MACDONALD, *Words in Stone? Agency and Identity in a Nazi Landscape*. In *Journal of Material Culture*. Vol. 11. No. 1–2, 2006, pp. 105–126.

⁶³ Cf. Gavriel D. ROSENFELD, *Munich and Memory. Architecture, Monuments and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2000; and William J. DIEBOLD, *The Politics of Derestoration. The Aegina Pediments and the German Confrontation with the Past*. In *Art Journal*, Vol. 54. No. 2. 1995/Summer, pp. 60–66. See also the study on the Pinakothek der Moderne in this volume.

Luirpoldarena, Kongresshalle, Zeppelinfeld, the Zeppelintribun, Marzfeld, the Hitler Jugend und Reichsarbeitsdienstlager, the SA and SS Lager, the Konzentrationslager operating in the same location and the sports stadiums has only survived in parts.⁶⁴

The architectural designs—the works of Clemens Klotz, Hermann Giesler, Paul Ludwig Troost, Albert Speer and Ludwig Ruff—were to follow primarily the Roman tradition and, to a lesser extent, the Greek tradition. The space development standards of the Third Reich represented a radical departure from the immediate past and modern architecture: the materials and the shapes were no longer related to the Bauhaus; concrete and glass gave way to stone, each and every urban space had the same central theme: to manipulate the rhythms of lights and shade, to convey monumentality and spectacularity, to inspire awe and submission, to advertise historical determinacy. Speer's works—especially the architectural designs and the remnants of the Reichsparteigelände in Nuremberg—evidence the endeavour to create the duality that characterizes Nazi ideology.

This architecture incorporated a feature—the architectural tradition of concentration camps—which has not been satisfactorily discussed in analyses of the cultural schemes of the Third Reich. Yet—as was pointed out by Paul B. Jaskot in his monograph⁶⁵ and also by Susanne Willems⁶⁶ in her study on Speer's anti-Semitism, his acts of co-operation with the SS and his activities in Auschwitz—there are good reasons why the history of the camps established by the SS cannot be ignored in connection with the social history of the architecture of National Socialism. The most significant of these is the economic role of the SS, mostly the

⁶⁴ Similarly to concentration camps, the history of the buildings of the Reichsparteitagsgelände in Nuremberg can be divided into several chapters; the history of the *vergangenheitsbewältigung* can also be reconstructed from the post-1945 period. The Zeppelinfeld and the Tribun were finally demolished, the camps established in Nuremberg can only be identified on the map today. The Dokumentationszentrum opened in 2001, after the rebuilding of the Günther Domenig—which was never completed—based on the designs of Ruff. The granite building of evoking classicism is cut through by a metal-and-glass structure. The modernist materials which were denounced and avoided both by Hitler and Speer, and the deconstructivism of architectural expansion signify the denial of the visual order and spatial ideals of National Socialism.

⁶⁵ Paul B. JASKOT, *The Architecture of Oppression. The SS, forced labor and the Nazi monumental building economy*. Routledge, London–New York, 2000.

⁶⁶ Susanne WILLEMS, Speers politische und finanzielle Geschäfte mit der SS. In http://www.susannewillems.de/archiv.php?page=Speers_Geschaefte_mit_der_SS

granite mined in the quarries of Flossenbürg and Mauthausen, which had a major part in the realization of the monumental Nazi buildings of both Berlin and Nuremberg. The granite extracted by the prisoners in the concentration camps provided building material for the Chancellor's Office in Berlin, the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich and the Kongresshalle in Nuremberg as well. The approach to Nazi architecture relying on the discussion of historical styles of art and architecture therefore needs an addendum. The totality of National Socialist architecture is inseparable from the political economics of the concentration camps and it is also important to recognize that in certain cases—such as the crematorium buildings—the architecture of Auschwitz is an integral part of National Socialist space architecture and philosophy, and even the architecture of Flossenbürg and Mauthausen are major chapters in Nazi political aesthetics.

The texts written by Albert Speer—these undeniably intelligent memoirs revealing a sophisticated talent for self-excusation—are greatly responsible for the prevalence of narratives that kept the interpretation of the architecture of National Socialism separate from the machinery of brutal suppression and extermination. The “reinstatement” of the economic and architectural history of concentration camps in the visual and landscaping development of the Third Reich therefore has another important function: it makes it manifest that the spaces of the SS empire—including the concentration camps—belong to the same social history and culture, they conform to the same aesthetic standard. The concentration and extermination camps are exemplars of the same uniform cultural space architecture as the stadiums of the Reichsparteitagsgelände are in Nuremberg. In fact, the camps of prisoners, of the SA and of the SS were in close vicinity of each other. Contemporary photographs testify that the shaping of SA and SS camps, their gates, their landscaping, the parallel obsession with geometry and romanticism are similar to the architectural solutions in Flossenbürg and Mauthausen. The aesthetic profile of the granite walls of Mauthausen was considered to be worthy of mention by Speer himself. In *The Slave State (Der Sklavenstaat)* published in 1981 Speer considers more sensitive subjects than in his *Memoirs* which were published in 1969. The latter moves back and forth in the duality of general and personal themes while the *Sklavenstaat* discusses Speer's personal relationship with the SS empire and with Himmler. In 1943, in his official role as Minister for Armaments, Speer visited Mauthausen, which had a key

role in imperial reconstruction. "I visited the concentration camp at Mauthausen in late March 1943. During my inspection I was surprised to see the granite retaining walls, on which barracks, likewise of natural stone, had been erected. I was shown the inside of the kitchen barrack, a washhouse barrack, a living barrack. Everything was clean and orderly.... The camp, or rather the small portion that I saw, made an almost romantic impression with its stone portal and medieval castle yards, its pseudohistorical walls and towers."⁶⁷ That is: certain parts of Mauthausen were considered worthy of preservation even after the slaughter of the prisoners who had laboured there. Mauthausen therefore constitutes the architectural *remains* of the National Socialist state—not only in the sense that Hitler or Speer intended in their vision of the thousand-year-old Third Reich.

The spirit of the place

On the way to Mauthausen we leave the A1 motorway at Enns, cross the bridge over the Danube and arrive in a small town of evidently good economic standing, whose present inhabitants live under the long shadow of the concentration camp built by their predecessors. The town with its approximately five thousand inhabitants is an important commercial centre on the river Danube, just as it was at the time the concentration camp was built, and it is one of the stops along the popular Vienna–Passau bicycle path. Hundreds of cyclists pass by from early summer to late autumn; the participants of the communal sport activity, which has become ever more popular since the nineties, form part of the current image of the town. Tourists linger in the cafés and restaurants along the Danube bank, in the gardens of the Donauhof, for instance, which is run by the Schöllbauer family and where customers can choose their meals from an "authentic" Austrian menu. The signpost of *Ehemalige KZ-lager* is conspicuous among the road signs along the river bank, as is the sign spelling *Soldatenfriedhof* (military cemetery) in the opposite direction. The concentration camp is located outside the town, which is still spreading and growing today; a row of quiet private homes has reached the side of the cemetery, where mostly World War I and in

⁶⁷ Albert SPEER, *Infiltration*. Macmillan Publishing, New York, 1981, p. 41.

smaller numbers World War II soldiers are buried: impassive time has closed in on the historical memorial site. Mostly Italian soldiers rest in the military cemetery of Mauthausen, a name is inscribed on each side of the little crosses: the limited size of the available space demands an economical solution. The centre of the well-tended cemetery lined with trees and carefully mown lawn is occupied by a modest monument displaying the details of those buried there, with a massive amorphous granite block on one side: 6000 Serbs. Directly beside the graveyard a kitchen window is open, the faint sound of music is audible in the bright sunlight of late summer. The people buried in the graves of the military cemetery died in wars the first of which—called great at the time because the coming world of destruction and mass murder was as yet unimaginable—has long lost its political significance: it has passed from the realm of living history to that of detached memory. The Second World War is a more complex issue.

To the North-West of the centre of Mauthausen a winding road of a few kilometres long runs up the hill and as we reach the ridgeline we glimpse the buildings of the one-time camp and, right next to it, the Besucherzentrum, the visitors' centre built in 2006 after the designs of Herwig Mayer, Christoph Schwartz and Karl Peyer-Heimstatt, which has given an almost entirely new character to the landscape surrounding the camp. I have visited Mauthausen four times in the past decade: the late modern, minimalist museum-memorial of the Besucherzentrum has undoubtedly opened a new phase in the post-1945 history of the one-time camp. Just as in the case of the Dokumentationzentrum of Nuremberg designed by Günther Domenig, the name "museum" is also avoided by the authorities responsible for the presentation of the modern image and the political message at Mauthausen. The architectural expansion to the Nuremberg Kongresshalle designed by Ruff and the exhibition it houses present the critical history of the National Socialist past of the square—the name "museum" would have been appropriate not only because of its neutral character but also as the retrospective legitimization of Ruff's building. The name—visitors' centre—given to the Mauthausen expansion completed in 2006 is a clear indication of the changes in remembrance policy in Austria as well. The Besucherzentrum fulfils museum functions—it displays original objects from the camp—and the building as a whole is an architectural critique of the SS style of construction. This new

building—and I shall return to its aesthetic implications and its effects on the entire landscape from a moral geographical point of view—constitutes a reminder that the former concentration camp and the monuments within it unavoidably and concurrently exist in two different spaces. At a given concrete point of historical space and time and in the imaginary cultural space of the cosmopolitan memory of the holocaust. In the latter sense, they exist in a cultus space where—as in every cultic place—time runs a different course.

When we stroll along the Danube bank, we pass the partly baroque and partly classicist centre of Mauthausen—which has been reconstructed in conformity with a perfectionist disposition—, walk up the winding path cut in a rich and lush forest and look down towards the Danube from the ridge, our gaze sweeps the stone building of the camp, its walls, the tourists—some of whom came by bicycle—talking, phoning, lingering in the car park among the foreign coaches, and we are suddenly struck by the impression that this sight is *too beautiful*. We are standing at the gates of Mauthausen in a literal and in a metaphorical sense: we know one thing and we see another. Those who visit a former concentration camp—as a pilgrim, scholar or tourist—will most often arrive in a location where the histories and spaces of modern society come to and end as known until then and another dimension opens: hell on Earth. Those who come here have probably read or heard that the concentration camp was the scene of horror, where everything that happened was irremediable. If the visitor did not come here by some accident, he or she came to personalise this knowledge. The visitors of concentration camps are either knowingly pilgrims or will become those; they are “believers,” who embarked on this journey not so much to attain a belief but to experience their responsibility. Then there are those who come driven by personal grief over the loss of someone and with the passing of time there are more and more of those who choose pilgrimage to one of the concentration camps urged by their cultural and political belonging.

And when they arrive, they feel perplexed: what they see in front of them is not only too beautiful but also incomprehensibly peaceful and irrevocably calm—certainly so compared to what is known about the Holocaust. The question arises how this sight can be connected to that knowledge, the truth of which is incontestable. Several former eyewitnesses and survivors have voiced their doubts over the past decades: whether what they once saw can still be seen today; what it



Along the Danube bank
Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008



Military cemetery
Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008

is to be an eyewitness, what it encompasses is a subject Tadeusz Borowski and Primo Levi, both of whom later committed suicide, were the first to talk of. At a later stage, Levi's work was analysed by Giorgio Agamben and eyewitness narratives appeared by Jean Amery and Sarah Kofman, who also ended their own lives.

As the visitor enters the camp through the gate—naturally—nothing changes: it is the same sun shining in the sky, the stillness is peaceful, the silence of the space enclosed by the grey granite walls does not feel threatening. The visitor ascends the stairs and decides which way to go on: to the left towards the monuments of different nations or to the right where—beyond a gate—a few preserved barracks of the one-time camp and the exhibitions arranged in them are to be found. The signs of horror become visible slowly and delicately as the visitor reaches the always threatening silence of the spaces of the past gas chambers and autopsy rooms.

But what is really happening here—and in the other camps: Auschwitz-Oświęcim, Birkenau, Buchenwald and Dachau? The discrepancy between knowledge and perception is closely related to the history of the place becoming invisible as can be experienced in this location. Can all those things that once happened in the concentration camp at Mauthausen still be seen—or does the “spectacle” of Mauthausen cover it up? For the spirit of the place to become perceptible, we must give up the hope that we might see Mauthausen itself in front of us in a single compactly packaged scene, in a single “fruitful” moment. I do not believe that we may reach the liberating reality of the unmediated experience of the Holocaust through a pilgrimage, sad and disturbing as though it may be. Mauthausen—whatever the visitor may see there—does not lie beyond historical time in the domain of the senses but, on the contrary, is predetermined by historical time. In discoursing on Mauthausen, we mention the universal tradition of the Holocaust; on arriving at the site, we must, again and again, face the ghosts of bereavement here, just as in Auschwitz, and we are met with the personal, individuated sensory reality of the—forever changing—historical spirit of the place. Because those layers of Mauthausen's meaning which are unrecoverable today could only be uncovered if the visitor had immediate access to the archaeological disclosures of the place, if the message emerging from the history of the place could be “read” there. Without this we may well be standing *there*, we may well be *seeing*



Granite block, military cemetery
Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008



The view of the camp with the visitors' centre
Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008

it with our own eyes, there will still remain countless invisible and real Mauthausens and we shall have different fragments of knowledge of each of them, of the traces of pasts that have fused into one.

The paradox of the present arrangement and landscape of the camp not offering any help whatsoever in making the reality of the camp comprehensible is undoubtedly difficult for the visitor to accept. The demand for building materials created by the building industry of the Third Reich and Speer's and Hitler's megalomania had a key role in the establishment of Mauthausen. The SS company Deutsche Erd- und Steinwerke GmbH (DESt) founded by Himmler in 1938 was charged with assisting in this endeavour. "To supply Speer with granite, DESt began to operate granite quarries in 1938. The first two to be acquired were a quarry near Flossenbürg, close to the Czech border in the Upper Palatinate, and a famous granite quarry adjacent to the Upper Austrian town of Mauthausen, near Linz. Before 1914 the quarries of Mauthausen had supplied most of the granite used in Vienna, Budapest, and the smaller cities of the former Austrian-Hungarian Empire. With the dissolution of the empire, however, Mauthausen had fallen on hard times. Demand for granite had decreased, even as the use of concrete increased. For the town Mauthausen the *Anschluss* of 1938 was a welcome event, in Hitler's Germany, granite was again the premier building material for public buildings. A few days after the *Anschluss*, Himmler and his aide Oswald Pohl, who controlled the administration of SS and its companies, toured the Mauthausen area with an eye to establishing a DESt branch to exploit its riches."⁶⁸ It took years, from 1938 to 1942, for German, Austrian and Czech political prisoners transferred from Dachau or Sachsenhausen and later for prisoners from the Spanish Republic and Polish, Yugoslav, Soviet, Czech, Belgian and French political prisoners to build Mauthausen, which looked much more like Wewelsburg,⁶⁹ the romantic fortress of the SS, than like a rational, tempo-

⁶⁸ JAN VAN PELT, *Auschwitz*.

⁶⁹ The remains of Löwenburg castle, designed by Heinrich Jussow, situated in the castle grounds of Wilhelmshöhe near Kassel probably contributed to the monopolization of Wewelsburg for SS purposes and to the horrible image of the "medieval, gothic" mythology with allusions to German Romanticism. "Wilhelmshöhe has not yielded up all its delights, for the park contains one of the most fanciful and elaborate mock-Gothic castles in Europe, known as Löwenburg. This picturesque extravaganza was designed in 1790 by Jussow for Landgrave Wilhelm IX and executed between 1795–1802." David WATKIN–Tilman MELLINGHOFF, *German Architecture and the Classical Ideal 1740–1840*. Thames and Hudson, London, 1987, p. 49.



“Too beautiful sight of the camp”

Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008



“Like a romantic fortress”

Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008

rary and *secret* forced labour camp. The iconography of the thick granite walls, the medievaesque loopholes, the turrets and the watch-towers, that is, the architectural scheme determining the image of the camp even today was an unfunctional, meaningless extravagance from the point of view of the terror at Mauthausen. The concentration camp stylised as a castle is one of the rare surviving reminders of SS building aesthetics; the practice and symbolic framework of the unspeakable brutality of the Third Reich can still be seen there. The medievaesque-romantic granite walls are truly expressive pieces of stone; they evidence the inseparability of the reactionary technological modernity of the National Socialist slave-state from its mythological obsession.

Mauthausen was the first camp where, in 1942, a gas chamber was built; this was closely related to the duality that characterized the behaviour of the SS throughout the period: the ambivalence of the concurrent operation of the economic and the terror machineries. The accomplishment of the economic targets expected of the SS—and dreamt of by Himmler as well—demanded live prisoners while in order to satisfy the political objectives, the concentration camps were assigned the important task of systematically exterminating the prisoners on a large scale. A series of sub-camps were built from 1940 onwards at Mauthausen; one of these was Gusen, where mostly political convicts were held imprisoned or were exterminated. By 1943 around 40 sub-camps surrounded Mauthausen; virtually the entire region became part of the geography of hell. Members of the French resistance started arriving in the camp in 1943, they were followed by Italian soldiers and partisans, Hungarian Jews, both men and women. In 1944 the camp complex held around 160 thousand prisoners of various nationalities and religions. New prisoners arrived in 1945 from concentration camps that had been liberated. During its operation, around one hundred thousand prisoners—of different nationalities and religions—died in Mauthausen and its sub-camps. Mauthausen was not an extermination camp without economic function—like Birkenau, for instance, in the summer of 1944, when Hungarian Jews were exterminated—but a labour camp, which played an important role in the economic life of the Third Reich. Nevertheless, it was a *deadly* place.

The only surviving records of the phase from 1938 to 5th May 1945—the date of its liberation—in the life of Mauthausen are the

photographs taken by or with the permission of the SS. The roughly 500 photographs are kept in various Spanish, French, Austrian and Czech archives today. Most of the pictures—including those taken on the day of the liberation of the camp and in the following months—were published in 2005 as part of an exhibition organized in Mauthausen,⁷⁰ this is how we can learn of the life of the camp as the SS wanted to present it. Jean-Marie Winkler emphasises in the foreword to the exhibition catalogue: these photographs are not documents of Mauthausen but National Socialist propaganda images using Mauthausen as their theme. Despite their absurdity, the pictures have important historical value in that they can assist in the reconstruction of the archaeology of the camp, of the *ecological landscape*. “In view of the conditions under which they were taken and the circumstances under which they were preserved, these photographs of the concentration camp system have a priceless historical value, while at the same time offering a narrow, incomplete and often haphazard view of a much more complex reality—so much so that the exhibition curators at one time considered placing an empty black panel in the middle of the exhibition as a graphic indication that there was a part of the camps that can never be seen—because it was never photographed, because the photos that existed were destroyed by the executioners as being too compromising, or simply because they have disappeared. The SS photographs speak the language of the Nazis, communicating the same totalitarian ideology that gave rise to the concentration camp system. In this sense they bear witness in spite of themselves to Nazism as oppression—provided the viewer knows how to interpret and decode them.”⁷¹ The exceedingly rare and precious “images malgré tout”—to use Didi-Huberman’s phrase—which were taken in Auschwitz-Birkenau and smuggled out by various prisoners and insurgents are therefore unknown in the case of Mauthausen.⁷² The undeniable pornog-

⁷⁰ *Das sichtbare Unfassbare. Fotografien vom Konzentrationslager Mauthausen. / The visible part. Photographs of Mauthausen Concentration Camp.* Foreword by Jean-Marie WINKLER. KZ-Gedenkstätte Mauthausen, Mandelbaum, 2005. (Catalogue to accompany the exhibition of the same name.)

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p., 16.

⁷² In the summer of 1944, a Polish resistance group or, according to other sources, members of the Sonderkommando took four photographs by the fifth crematorium in Birkenau. The photos can be credited to Alex, Szlojme Dragon, Josel Dragon or Alter Szmul Fajnzylberg. Cf. Clement CHÉROUX, Photographies de la résistance polonaise à Auschwitz. In *Mémoire des camps*, pp. 86–91; and Jean-Claude PRESSAC, *Auschwitz: Technique and operation of the gas chambers*. Beate Klarsfeld Foundation, New York, 1989, pp. 422–42; DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Images malgré tout*.

raphy of the SS pictures—and the architectural necrophilia of Mauthausen as a whole—derives from the false image that appeared to represent reality at the time they were recorded. That is the perception of the victors: the photographs were taken from their perspective. (The contemporary pictures taken in Mauthausen also bring up that which was always made invisible by the victors, that is, the question of the fate of the losers who were tossed into the non-existence of the lie of non-occurrence. The reason why the four photographs analysed by Didi-Huberman are exceptionally valuable is not because they constitute historical evidence against the lies of revisionist history writing. Rather, because those pictures were taken by people whose views had no connection to Nazism. The album photographs depicting the fate of Hungarian Jewry at Auschwitz, for instance, are so disturbing for the same reason: they were not simply taken by an unknown photographer but by an unidentified SS guard (or SS-sympathizer); someone who “saved” the last moments before the execution. This is what makes the Auschwitz album an unbearable, morally unacceptable series of photographs, while at the same time it is a document of undisputable value.)

Some pictures show men dressed in civilian clothes—standing in front of the *Klagemauer* (the Wailing Wall) as camp jargon refers to it. These photographs were probably taken between 1942 and 1945. Some of the young men appear in more than one picture. The majority of the photos taken by the “Erkennungsdienst”⁷³ in a style used in criminology were destroyed by the SS in May 1945. The surviving and published pictures can be divided into two well differentiated groups. The pictures in one group show impoverished, bare-footed men wearing rags, who still display signs of freedom, will and dignity defying their condition. While they are in a poor condition—one of them is brutally beaten—they are not *prisoners* yet and they are definitely not *muselmänner* (according to the dictionary of the KZ: Muslims). They still have personal belongings, some wear a moustache or beard. Other pictures show young men, almost children, in a better condition. One is wearing a uniform, others have hats or military boots alluding to a uniform. Two group photographs suggest that the people in them know each other but this cannot be verified.

The pictures of the other group were taken on the occasion of Himmler’s visit to Mauthausen in 1941; these radiate reassuring

⁷³ Identification Service, an administrative unit within the SS camp.

familiarity safeguarded by power: jauntily posing, cheerful and contented groups of Nazis. The picture series following the ritual of a factory tour makes an almost frightening impression in conveying the gestures of an “everyday” visit by political powers; the fact that neither Himmler nor the SS leaders show the slightest sign of tension at the concentration camp in 1941 gives a repulsive character to the images. Their behaviour is no different from politicians’ surveying a production plant or taking part in the opening ceremony of a new motorway. There is another piece of thought provoking visual information in these pictures: the profound indifference of the SS officers towards the prisoners appearing in the background. The prisoners are remarkably close to the Reichsführer—as Heinrich Himmler was called in the Third Reich—in some of the photographs. There is only one photo where one of the SS officers walking beside Himmler casts a watchful glance at the inmate standing by the wall—there are no signs of the SS leadership being aware of the people around them in any of the other pictures. The images confirm what we know from several written documents: the inmates of the concentration camps were not considered to be dangerous. The complete disregard of the prisoners also indicates that although the establishment of extermination camps and concentration camps had different motivations, the end results only show modest statistical differences in the respective likelihoods of survival.

The relationship of these pictures to authenticity is an especially complex question. The SS meant them to preserve their own history, their own cultural memory; the prisoners are immaterial, invisible, virtually dead both for Himmler and his company viewing the architectural accomplishments and for the photographer. Several pictures were taken where the Mauthausen of the SS is depicted from the horizon of the hopeful future, the final victory: without prisoners. Since successful obliteration is always invisible, the SS expected something more and different of the representation of the architecture of the “thousand-year-old Third Reich” than it was in reality: a machinery of mass murder. Walter Benjamin noted the *emptiness* of the scene as a curious and important characteristic of early SS photography. The perpetrators do not appear to be aware of the fact that in depicting their scenes of victory they also depict the scene of the crime. The photos showing SS officers performing various parade exercises and other military functions make it manifest that the spirit of Reichsparteitag, the

“Versammlungsarchitektur” played a fundamental role in the design of Mauthausen as well. The pictures without prisoners or barracks give the disconcerting impression that the concentration camp conceived and carried through by the SS in Mauthausen could be just one typical phase of the history of the Third Reich. The buildings conveying permanence in Auschwitz date back to the age of the Monarchy; the SS only “recycled” them. The architecture of Flossenbürg and Mauthausen, with their architectural remains reaching beyond gas chambers even, is a more complex issue. In Birkenau or Buchenwald we do not get the impression that the barracks—what remains of them today—were built to last: these buildings needed to survive only as long as the “Endlösung” was in process.

Nevertheless, Mauthausen, Wewelsburg and Flossenbürg are memorials to a historical period that never came. In reconstructing Mauthausen—the interrelations of monument and memorial site—1945 meant a turning point not only in a political sense but also with respect to sources. The everyday practices of the camp were predominantly concealed between 1938 and 1945; what happened there remained mostly invisible, what we know today is based on the accounts given by survivors. Some of the events after the liberation, however, were followed by the media and the general public, even if the meaning and significance of this publicity have been constantly changing over the sixty years that have since passed. I believe that what has happened in Mauthausen since 1945 is not simply the after-life of the camp but part of the progression in remembrance policy whose continual evolution is the medial heritage of the “original” Mauthausen.

5th May, 1945, the liberation of the camp, brought about several changes which can be barely deduced from the present condition of Mauthausen, from the remains visible today. The fortress-like granite walls stretching along the hill ridge, the carefully tended parkland beneath it, the car park, the new building of the Besucherzentrum form a complete whole and its present character swallows the memories of yesterdays. Those who have visited the camp in the past decades could only see isolated moments of the history of Mauthausen; one piece of a series moving along infinitely slowly; for them that is *the* camp. But these images have very little to do with the reality that American soldiers saw when they arrived in 1945 and met the survivors.

The imperial eagle and the swastika that can be seen above the old “Garagenhofeinfahrt,” the granite gate, were removed by the inmates themselves with the help of a rope.⁷⁴ The event was recorded on camera, similarly to several other moments of the following weeks: the arrival of the American soldiers, the burial of the dead, the temporary lives of dangerously thin survivors. The photographs taken in this period⁷⁵—the ones of the crematoria, for instance—were not only historical documents but also legal records; they were used at the Nuremberg Trials, at Eichmann’s trials in Jerusalem and finally at the SS trials of Frankfurt.

Mauthausen was supervised by the occupying Soviet forces between 1945 and 1947. A few months after the liberation one of the former Austrian inmates who returned for a visit described the state of the camp as terrible:⁷⁶ potato plantations alternated with rubbish heaps. The “normalization” of the situation had to wait till after 1947. In the months after the liberation cemeteries were created in the immediate surroundings and also inside the camps at Mauthausen, Gusen and Ebensee.⁷⁷ The partly unidentified graves of the cemetery on the site of the former SS sports grounds near Mauthausen were demolished in 1955. The forest of wooden crosses was punctuated with Stars of David. This cemetery was recorded by a number of photographers on 22nd or 23rd June 1945; present visitors to Mauthausen can judge from their photographs the consequences of the elimination of the cemetery in 1955 and the *reburial* of the bodies in a mass grave excavated within the site of the former camp. The cemetery outside the camp was undeniably simple—in so far as this phrase is meaningful in this context—but disregarding the absence of plant life, it had the aura of any other military cemetery

⁷⁴ Paul LE CAËR–Bob SHEPPARD, *Album Mémorial*. Editions Heimdal, Bayeux, 2000, pp. 70–75.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 76–82.

⁷⁶ Bertrand PERZ–Mario WIMMER, Geschichte de Gedenkstätte. In *Das Gedächtnis von Mauthausen*. Bundesministerium für Inneres Referat IV/7/a, Archiv der KZ Gedenkstätte Mauthausen. 2006, p. 62.

⁷⁷ The cemetery beside the camp at Ebensee was closed and transferred to the territory of the former KZ in 1952. In 1952 the local authorities added a new memorial to Hilda Lepetit’s memorial of 1948. At present around 3600 victims rest in the sole mass grave beside the memorial. Between 1945 and 1952 the sight of the cemetery beside the old road to Bad Ischl, with its wooden crosses and Stars of David, had presumably had an undesirably depressing effect on the inhabitants and politicians of cold war Austria, who were not particularly motivated to observe rites of remembering.

in the world; the one located at the other end of Mauthausen, for instance. But the cemeteries built in Ebensee or Gusen or Mauthausen were not military cemeteries but the graves of unnamed prisoners with the visual norms of such; graves of prisoners whose public memory could not be assimilated into the political and cultural logic of the years following 1945. Let us not forget that the elimination of the cemeteries between 1952 and 1955 cannot in its entirety be interpreted in the framework of the Holocaust paradigm that had developed by the nineties, and whose norms may not be imposed in retrospect on the 1950s. In these cemeteries—as the photographs bear witness—the graves of Jews and non-Jews lay beside one another as self-evidently as these Jews and non-Jews lived beside one another in the camp. The sight of the cemeteries, which were unusual in several respects, was incompatible with the standards of moral geography dominant in the Austria of the time.⁷⁸

The concepts of landscape and national history have always had close associations. Modern, post-18th century landscape—whether it evokes idealised, mythological pasts or not—is unavoidably part of the interpretative framework of national history. And the concept of national history encompassed the narrative of cultural spaces, that is landscapes, in addition to the narrative of texts. Andrew Charlesworth has shown in a number of his studies analyzing the topography, the ecological landscape of Auschwitz that the existence of the concentration camps gave rise to several problems in the wake of their liberation for the local population in Poland as much as for people in Germany and Mauthausen. The preservation of the cemeteries, their transfer to locations within the walls of the camps is an indication of the sensitivity of the problem concerning the *borders* of the former camps—the problem of putting chronology and everyday life on hold. No-one in the fifties thought of preserving camps in their entirety, nor did people see the camps of 1945 as something to be protected as monuments, as sites of remembrance. Different local interests in Dachau, Buchenwald and Auschwitz all led to the same result in different ways: the majority of the camps were demolished and although their locations were demarcated, the architectural horror was made invisible. The aim was the same everywhere: to lock up the camps and the reality of what had happened in them behind the walls.

⁷⁸ SMITH, *Moral Geographies*.

Although the buildings erected beside or inside the camps have been monuments, a long time had to pass before it became evident that they stood in a memorial site, in a distinguished space—at the time when the camps themselves became visible as the authentic sites and untouchable spaces of remembering.

The complexity and strain of this shift in attitudes—the interpretation of the camps as, to use Sharon Macdonald's term, "undesirable heritage" becoming dominant—and the heavy dependence of attitudes on the changes in the interpretation of the Third Reich and Nazism all reflect trends in research processes, the changing focus of analysis on one or another scientific approach or discourse. In addition to political history and later historical science, these places were the targets of research over several decades in the history of art and architecture. With the development of a Holocaust paradigm, with its universal approach becoming dominant, individual changes of interpretation in the history of the camps were naturally sidelined as issues falling outside the scope of history and belonging to the universal moral trauma—their post-1945 state and fate were consequently given little attention. Research efforts could be directed towards interpretation in the context of the conceptual and categorial frameworks of moral geography and ecological landscapes at the point when historical time crossed the line and entered the dimensions of "natural history," when it became manifest that the condition of the camps and their natural surroundings could in combination be the subject of research. What vegetation was there in the camps before 1945? What did the prisoners see in their surroundings? How could we reconstruct the ecological conditions of the period before 1945? What can be done about plant life in the period after 1945? Should we plant roses in Auschwitz? Was there anything of the sort before 1945? Was there any grass? What were lighting conditions like? Where did the road pass? These questions indicate that the approach to concentration camps as monuments is being replaced by their interpretation as sites of remembering. This historical shift in perception may have significant consequences for the development of the aesthetic approach, which regards the interpretation of traumatic experiences as its mission. The analysis of the camps from the perspective of historical geography uncovered often emotional debates between cultural uses, whose interpretation does not belong to the aftermath of the camps but is a chapter of their historical existence.

The question of control over public visits to the camps arose almost immediately after the liberation. Once the military authorities left the camps, their care and fate was put in the hands of local politics and greater political influences. The memory of Mauthausen and its sub-camps, their place in society was determined by Austrian identity policy after the World War. Austria played the role of the victim according to this screenplay of the events, the Anschluss was an attack on an independent, neutral country, therefore the Austrian people were no less victims than those who were imprisoned in the camps by the National Socialist German Empire. The marks of this view can still be discovered at the exhibition that has been displayed since 1982 in one of the barracks at Mauthausen under the title *Österreicher in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*.⁷⁹ The current Austrian viewpoint determined the circumstances under which the sarcophagus memorial with an inscription in Latin script was erected in the Appelplatz in 1949 and it also had a major influence on the ensuing debates. In the case of Mauthausen local authorities had to negotiate not “only” Jews but also Italians, Spanish and the Soviet Union; they had to come to an agreement with countries that cared and still care for their citizens who died at Mauthausen. Also—as was mentioned before—Mauthausen is a military cemetery as well: the notions of fighter, martyr and victim are inevitably and constantly fused and interchanged. The designs of the reconstruction of Mauthausen drawn in the fifties show—as Bertrand Perz and Mario Wimmer document in their study—how landscape designers of the time tried to make the camp invisible with the help of the visual effects of “nature”: trees and lawns. We encounter this paradoxical method again and again: natural phenomena lying outside the realm of historicism, the features of physical geography, of the ecological landscape were used and have been used in a variety of contexts ever since to render the original scene unperceivable.

The park of national monuments created on the grounds of the demolished SS barracks at Mauthausen is a good demonstration of the significance of the dominance of monument erection—how the function of the place as a site of remembering was downplayed. This park

⁷⁹ *Österreicher in Nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern*. Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz. Öffentliches Denkmalmuseum Mauthausen, Eigentümer. Edited and published by Österreichische Lagergemeinschaft Mauthausen.

of sculptures is in some ways similar to the one in the Gedenkstätte at Buchenwald: it displays monuments created by states that ceased to exist one and a half decades ago. The monuments of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic are lined up beside those of countries that were established after 1989, such as independent Slovenia. And there are countries, such as Hungary, which have gone a long way from the period of National Socialism, whose monuments in Mauthausen are therefore difficult to reconcile with their remembrance policies today. The Hungarian martyr-monument in Mauthausen, for instance, was made by the Greek communist emigrant Makris Agamemnon in the name of internationalism, the concept and standards of which are no longer legitimate today. Makris was one of the sculptors whose works were collected in the Statue Park in Budapest in 1991. The series of memorials displaying variations on the uniform blueprint of pathos for national heroism and resistance, the chorus of the pathos of triumph is interrupted by the Italian Wailing Wall, which was built not as a monument but as a memorial site. The duality described by Danto and interpreted by James Young can be identified in Mauthausen as well: "We erect monuments so that we shall always remember, and build memorials so that we shall never forget. Thus we have the Washington Monument but the Lincoln Memorial. Monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualise remembrance and mark the reality of ends. The Washington Monument, vertical, is a celebration, like fireworks. The Lincoln Memorial, even if on a rise, presses down and is a mediation in stone. Very few nations erect monuments to their defeats, but many set up memorials to the defeated dead."⁸⁰ Mauthausen is a monument in the same way and in the same place as it is a memorial site; the inmates of the concentration camp are due both the pathos of heroism and the respect that the sufferings of the victims deserve. But we also have memorials to victims who do not fit the framework of a military cemetery and monument: Jewish, Roma and homosexual victims. All those who did not fight the Third Reich, who "only" became its victims. The almost abstract monument of the Federal Republic of Germany designed by Fritz Koenig and erected in 1983 is worthy of attention in this respect as well, in that it almost completely lacks the heroic sense that underlies national remembrance and is

⁸⁰ Arthur C. DANTO, *The Vietnam Veterans Memorial*. Op. cit.

characteristic of the Polish, Hungarian, Czechoslovakian and Bulgarian monuments. The collapsing puppet of the memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany follows the traditional iconography of German victims, which appears, for instance, in the early novels of Heinrich Böll, those written before the Frankfurt speech. The monument of Germany represented as the victim of the Third Reich is concurrently a site of remembering their continually changing sense of historical identity. Finally, we have the sarcophagus in the Appelplatz erected in 1949, the memorial of the constantly changing Austrian perspective settling the issue for decades. The phenomenon of a memorial site being suppressed by monuments seen in the case of Mauthausen is similar to the situation in Buchenwald. In Mauthausen, however, the area of the original camp, the grounds of the destroyed barracks are barely marked, we can only get a feel for the overall size of the former camp, we cannot see it. The area occupied by the SS barracks, the sports grounds, the former cemetery and objects outside the walls are all undelineated. The situation is similar in Auschwitz. It is possible to tour Birkenau, similarly to Buchenwald. The visitor can have an idea of the space the Endlösung required—but several other questions arise here: why is it covered in lawn? What did it look like *then*? Could the ecology of the years of destruction, of the Endlösung be reconstructed?

Does all that indicate a pantheon-like perception of the concentration camps? The Pantheon of Paris and the Walhalla, the Parthenon imitation by Leo von Klenze, are constructions of the trust nations conscious of their historical continuity place in eternity: according to this tradition the endurance of a nation is ensured by the preservation of the memory of its great figures. Since 2003, the bust of Sophie Scholl, the young student of Munich who was a member of the White Rose resistance movement, a heroine protesting against National Socialism, has been—deservedly and correctly—displayed among the dead of the Walhalla promising national immortality. And should not be heroes all those who were murdered in concentration or extermination camps? Should we not see Mauthausen, Buchenwald and the other camps as memorial sites for all those heroes who lived and died with the insanity of the Third Reich rather than as cemeteries of martyrs, fighters and opponents?

As shown by Speer's memoirs, Hitler, with his fanatic fixation on the tradition of Roman architecture, saw control over space as the



Hungarian martyr-monument

Mauthausen

Sculptor: Makris Agamemnon

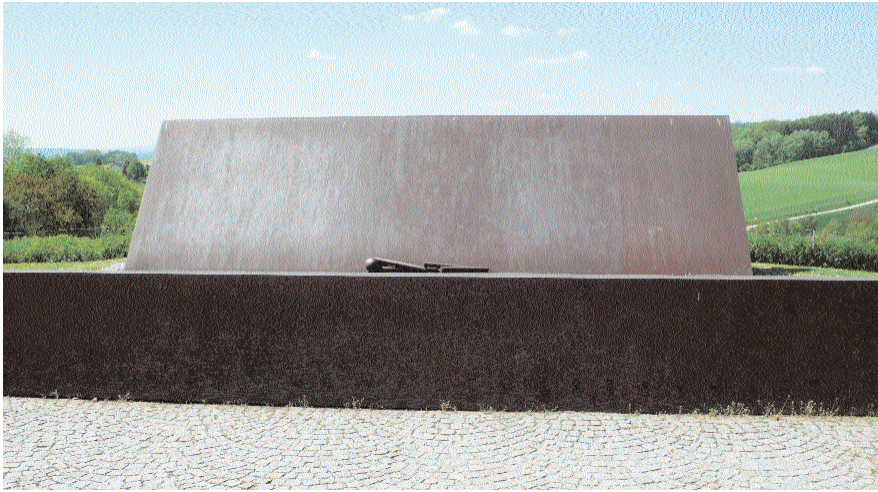
Architect: István Janáky, 1964

Photo: Péter György, 2008

guarantee for the eternal existence of the German Empire: the opportunities provided by mythological associations promising longer existence than the history of modern society characterizable in terms of rational politics. “‘Ultimately, all that remained to remind men of the great epochs of history was their monumental architecture,’ he would philosophize. ‘What had remained of the emperors of Rome? What would still bear witness to them today, if their buildings had not survived? Periods of weakness are bound to occur in the history of nations,’ he argued, ‘but at their lowest ebb, their architecture will speak to them of former power.... Our architectural works should also speak to the conscience of a future Germany centuries from now.’ In advancing this argument Hitler also stressed the value of a permanent type of construction. The building on the Zeppelin Field was begun at once, in order at least for the platform to get ready for the coming Party Rally. To clear ground for it, the Nuremberg street-car depot had to be removed. I passed by its remains after it had been blown up. The iron reinforcements protruded from concrete debris and had already begun to rust. One could easily visualise their further decay. This dreary sight led me to some thoughts which I later proposed to Hitler under the pretentious heading of ‘A Theory of Ruin Value.’ The idea was that buildings of modern construction were poorly suited to form that ‘bridge to tradition’ to future generations which Hitler was calling for....My ‘Theory’ was intended to deal with this dilemma. By using special materials and by applying certain principles of statics, we should be able to build structures which even in a state of decay, after hundreds of (such were our reckonings) thousands of year would more or less resemble Roman models.”⁸¹

So *this* is what the granite of Flossenbürg and Mauthausen was needed for. This is why hundreds of thousands of people died in the various camps of the SS—in the service of this shabbily constructed, cheap little theory which the highly arrogant Albert Speer was not even ashamed of in his later life. This is why he visited Mauthau-

⁸¹ Albert SPEER, *Architectural Megalomania*. In Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*. The Macmillan Company, New York, 1970, pp. 55–56. There was one case, of course, when Hitler and Speer chose concrete instead of granite: the Atlantic wall. On the aesthetics of the ruined bunkers, see Paul VIRILIO, *Bunker Archeology*. Trans. by Gary COLLINS. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1994.



The memorial of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mauthausen
Sculptor: Fritz Koenig, 1983

Photo: Péter György, 2008



Pantheon-like perception
 monuments of Czechoslovakia and USSR, Mauthausen

Photo: Péter György, 2008

sen—to inspect the progress of production. This is why he noted the walls of Mauthausen with surprise: he probably realised that the SS wanted its share of the architectural guarantees of the myth of eternal existence. And then events took a different turn from what he and Hitler had envisioned.

But they did leave ruins behind them: Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Nuremberg bombed to the ground, a country turned into ruins. Hitler's Chancellorship collapsed in 1945, a substantial proportion of the megalomaniac buildings of the Third Reich were blown up; including the Zeppelinfeld, whose "modern" remains were observed by Speer with such interest. Around the Reichsparteitagsgelände of Nuremberg, Königsplatz in Munich and Wilhelmstrasse in Berlin, the remaining buildings of the era of National Socialism were incorporated into different urban frames; a variety of techniques were used to strip them of the mythical ruin character that Hitler had prized in the Coliseum as the sign of greatness.

And there remained some unplanned monuments and memorials: sites of the undesired heritage from the world of the Third Reich. In parts and after several rebuilding efforts but there remained the concentration camps, Flossenbürg and Mauthausen: they are witness to the *price* of Hitler and Speer's architectural megalomania, they make it manifest that the architecture of the Third Reich was built on mass murders, the work of hundreds of thousands of people forced into slavery. They are the victims of the nightmare of the thousand-year-old German Empire, who found their graves in the concentration camps, who rest in the pantheons of Dachau, Buchenwald/Weimar, Auschwitz/Oświęcim and Mauthausen. If they rest.

Oedipus at Colonus, Freud (museum) in exile

A cancelled German, a ~~German~~ Jew¹

In memory of András Péter

“But what is most striking is that the new discourse of psychoanalysis, the scientific language that Freud evolves (among other reasons) to exorcise the demon of anti-Semitism from the world of human sciences, becomes stereotyped (even in Freud’s mind) as the language of Jews. This tension between the universalizing desire of psychoanalysis and the particularistic charge that this discourse is but the masked language of Jews exemplifies the burden under which the Jewish scientist of the fin de siècle struggled. The terms of that struggle were inscribed on the Jew’s body, not only in the world of science but also in the general culture in which Jews lived.”²

In recent years quite a few exhibitions reflecting on the collections themselves and remaining semi-independent of the subject of psychoanalysis have been put on display in the Freud museums of both Vienna and London. These exhibitions suggest that visitors have two Freud museums at their disposal which are difficult to interpret one without the other. (The third one, Freud’s Dream Museum of St Petersburg³

¹ Cf. Richard H. ARMSTRONG, *A Compulsion for Antiquity. Freud and the Ancient World*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca–London, 2005, pp. 224.

² Sander L. GILMAN, *The Case of Sigmund Freud. Medicine and Identity at the Fin de Siècle*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore–London, 1995, pp. 37.

³ Cf. Viktor MAZIN–Olesya TURKINA, Susan Hiller in Freud’s Dream Museum. In *Kabinet. Arts and Dreams*. The British Council, Freud’s Dream Museum, Saint Petersburg, 2002, pp. 213–229; and Kabinet P. Traumlandschaften. Festival des Österreichischen Kulturforums Moskau, 2005. The bilingual volumes edited by Viktor MAZIN are important anthologies of Freud museology.

maintained by Victor Mazin, the avant-garde creative and museum artist, gains part of its significance in the context of the museums in Vienna and London.⁴) Visitors to the London museum in Maresfield Gardens are struck by the silent presence of the ghosts of Berggasse 19 while those entering the Freud museum of Vienna cannot help noticing the absence of cultic objects and the inexplicable scarceness of “authentic” exhibits. Both museums display a shocking “unaltered original scene.” The intention is clear in Maresfield Gardens: everything is still the same today as it would have been on Freud’s “last evening,” the desk with the ashtray, the pens, the eyeglasses, the manuscripts. The arrangement of the objects displays a silent but dramatic setting: as if Freud had not been dead for decades but had just left this scene and could be returning any moment. The object-free Freud museum of Vienna has the experience of the genuineness of the sacred space in focus: authenticity despite the complete emptiness of the consulting room and the study. The objects are authentic in London and the location in Vienna. The visual display is a decisive political issue in both museums and it is symptomatic down to its smallest details.

In this paper I undertake to reveal how the technical details of the exhibitions reflect on the trauma which is not so much related to the authority of the concepts discovered and interpreted by psychoanalysis any more but rather to the history of the collections and the issues of displacement, repression and the return of repression. The Freud museums are also the museums of the history of Freudism and the fate of psychoanalysis and its advocates is inseparable from the fear and horror that penetrated daily life in the Third Reich.

Vienna presented the exhibition entitled “Meine...alten und dreckigen Götter—Aus Sigmund Freud Sammlung” (“My Old and Dirty Gods”)⁵ in 2001. The display is an arrangement of the antique col-

⁴ I have not yet had the opportunity to visit the recently opened museum and memorial room housed in Freud’s home of birth in Freiberg, that is, Příbor. It is reasonable to contend, however, that the existence of *four* museums dedicated to Freud will prompt analysts to reconsider quite a few issues.

⁵ “*Meine alten und dreckigen Götter.*” Aus Sigmund Freuds Sammlung. Ed. by Lydia MARINELLI. Sigmund Freud-Museum, Stroemfeld, Frankfurt am Main, 1998. In connection with Freud’s antique collection, see: *Sigmund Freud and Art. His Personal Collection of Antiquities*. Ed. by Lynn GAMWELL and Richard WELLS. State University of New York, Freud Museum London, 1989. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same name); John FORRESTER, “Mille e tre.” Freud and Collecting. In *The Cultures of Collecting*. Ed. by John

lection that had been stored in London since 1938, shown in the original setting, interpreted from the perspective of the roots of the collection and in the context of psychoanalysis. The simple fact that the collection could be seen again in its one-time location in itself guaranteed the significance of the temporary exhibition. These objects temporarily returned to Vienna, from where they once followed Freud into exile. A modest proportion of the collection, consisting of thousands of pieces of mostly sculpture and, less prominently, painting and fresco fragments, was displayed in the Waiting Room in Berggasse in 1993 as part of the permanent exhibition in Vienna. The local arrangement of the antiquities from London, their visual display, warns the visitor that although these objects have returned to Vienna, originally they were not located in the waiting room now furnished in part with authentic furniture and in part with reproductions. This circumstance is also indicative of the complex nature of the interpretation of the notions of authentic and reproduction in the Freud museum of Vienna.

The exhibition entitled Julius Deutschbauer: Library of Unread Books was also put on show in 2001 as part of the series View from Outside. The series, which still continues today, is arranged in a street gallery on the ground floor of Berggasse 19, in the one-time kosher butcher's shop of Siegmund Kornmehl, which is furnished on the basis of Edmund Engelman's legendary photography from 1938. The Joseph Kosuth exhibition: Ansicht der Erinnerung/A View to Memory held here in 2002 consisted of a large montage of a text by Freud and the shop window reconstructed with the help of Engelman's photographs.⁶ At the opening of the exhibition Kosuth analysed in his speech the connections between historical documents and aesthetic interpretation in the context of Engelman's photography.

ELSNER and Roger CARDINAL. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1994, pp. 224–252; *Excavations and Their Objects. Freud's Collection of Antiquity*. Ed. by Stephen BARKER. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996; Louis ROSE, *The Survival of Images. Art Historians, Psychoanalysts, and the Ancients*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2001; and Richard H. ARMSTRONG, Op. cit.

In Freud's case the dramatic arrangement of manuscripts is complemented by the effects of the antiquities lined up on the desktop. In this connection see: *Freud's Sculpture*. Ed. by Michael MOLNAR, Ivan WARD and Jon WOOD. Henry Moore Sculpture Trust, Leeds, 2006. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same name.)

⁶ Edmund ENGELMAN–Inge SCHOLZ-STRASSER, *Sigmund Freud. Wien IX. Berggasse 19*. Christian Brandstätter, Wien, 1993.

Robert Longo's exhibition, *The Freud Drawings*,⁷ was presented in Albertina in the spring of 2003. The American artist explores the subject of Engelman's photography. The large, dramatic charcoal drawings are in more than one respect the radical "reworking" of the photographs taken hurriedly in the last minute in 1938. While the fever of documenting the last moment is apparent in the original photographs, which are now regarded as records of the surroundings of Freud's everyday scientific activities and therefore as sources of key importance for museology, Longo's charcoal drawings conspicuously miss the abundance of objects, the "wie eigentlich gewesen" characteristic of the photos. Longo's drawings wipe away the documentarism of the original photographs; the enormous black surfaces, the objects emerging from their darkness do not so much bring to mind the significance of the birthplace of psychoanalysis for cultural history but are evocative of the expulsion and the partially successful extermination of the inhabitants of Berggasse by the Nazis. The aesthetic discourse of the Longo drawings is unimaginable without the archaeology of Berggasse 19.⁸ The history of suppression in Berggasse 19 is, of course, not isolated. The establishment of the museum, its cultural and political context today are not independent of the representation of the Holocaust in the post-war and then the post-cold war era. As indicated by the title of Jeffrey Alexander's famed study "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The 'Holocaust' from Mass Murder to Trauma Drama,"⁹ the interpretation has moved away from political history towards becoming an authority on the universal moral message. In so far as Austria surpassed even Ger-

⁷ Robert LONGO, *The Freud Drawings*. Kerber, Bielefeld, 2003.

⁸ The analysis of the Longo drawings goes beyond the scope of this study. I would like to point out, however, that the *metaphorical* interpretation of the connections between the Freud Museum and the Longo drawings carries the potential for an aesthetic approach based on a deeper analysis of associative relationships in cultural history. There is usually a good reason for considering great theories of aesthetics to be "indescribable"; that is, the relationships governing the meanings and the effects a particular work of art has over the course of history are impossible to reconstruct in general terms. Micro-historiographic relationships—such as the drawings emerging from the Engelman photographs—often promise aesthetic experiences which we could barely hope for. The aesthetic approach is simply inaccessible without the practical analysis and meticulous reconstruction of the interrelationships holding in political and social history.

⁹ Jeffrey C. ALEXANDER, On the Social Construction of Moral Universals. The "Holocaust" from Mass Murder to Trauma Drama. In *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2002, pp. 5–85.

many in seeking and finding opportunities to dispel thoughts of the “atrocities committed against Jews” from collective memory, what the story of the Freud museum reveals is precisely the political, cultural significance of this metamorphosis.¹⁰ That is, the Freud museum is the cultic venue not only of the birth of psychoanalysis but also of Austrian self-reflection, of the acquired, adapted trauma of contemporary society living in the age of postmemory. This transformation is manifest in the exhibition entitled *Freuds verschwundene Nachbarn* (Freud’s Lost Neighbours),¹¹ which is displayed in the museum proper and which centres around the reinterpretation of the notion of authenticity with the issue of “wie eigentlich gewesen” not restricted to the reconstruction of the apartment and the object collection but extended over the entire building focussing on the events that took place after 1938 involving Freud’s neighbours. That is, the exhibition invited the users of the building, the present inhabitants of the city and the museum visitors to face the now invisible past, the tragedies of which emerge through the facts recorded in the archives more graphically than anywhere else. Half of the inhabitants of Berggasse 19 were deported and executed in concentration camps. There were some, such as Siegmund Kornmehl, the butcher, who managed to emigrate to Palestine. The exhibition catalogue mercilessly exposes the bureaucratic process of ransacking, expulsion, incarceration in ghettos and deportation: the persuasive force of the large number of authentic documents is greatly effective. Such is, for instance, the deportation and death of Adolf Mathias and his wife, Stefanie Mathias, who once lived one floor up from Freud, behind “Tür 7.” The apartment was re-purchased by the local government of Vienna in 2005 and in 2006 a temporary exhibition entitled *Die Couch, Vom Denken im Liegen* (The Couch: Thinking in Repose)¹² was displayed here as part of the event series organised on the occasion of the Freud anniversary. The then empty apartment was kept in its 2005 state. Behind the objects and documents reconstructing the

¹⁰ Works such as W.G. Sebald’s are to be interpreted against the background of the dominance of the cultural trauma perspective.

¹¹ *Freuds verschwundene Nachbarn*. Ed. by Lydia MARINELLI. Turia und Kant, Vienna, 2003. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same name.)

¹² *Die Couch. Vom Denken im Liegen*. (Eine Ausstellung der Sigmund-Freud-Privatstiftung. Sigmund-Freud-Museum, Wien.) Ed. by Lydia MARINELLI. Prestel, Munich, 2006. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same name.)

original culture-historical contexts of psychoanalysis, exhibition visitors constantly encountered traces of the lives of unknown occupants, Austrian people living here after the Mathias family, left all over the walls: shadow-like patches of dirt and dust remaining after the pictures were removed in 2005, nails, handles of various ages, layers of discoloured white paint on the doors, reminders of wear and tear. Visitors entering the *Die Couch* exhibition experience a peculiar feeling of tension: they are in an unfamiliar apartment, on a white stage above the wooden floor. All this creates an impression of dreamlike hovering that further stretches the tension between the neutrality of the public museum space, the white cube, and the intimacy of the multiply abandoned dwelling. The visitor is overwhelmed by a Pompeii-sensation in the Freud museums. The tension created by witnessing the personal mementoes of unknown lives is none different from the embarrassment of the onlooker turned into a voyeur. This feeling is more than embarrassing in the context of a museum whose archaeology encompasses, among other things, stories of leaving homes. A few years ago a member of the Pfeiffer family who had moved into Freud's former home after 1938 was asked in an interview why they were reluctant to sell the apartment to the local council of Vienna. The respondent indicated the emptiness of the apartment: the space that they had believed to have no past when they had bought it. Occupants arriving after 1938 most probably acted in good faith and it had to be a disturbing moment for them when they discovered the shadows of a dark history with which they had been sharing that space. And now, in 2006, visitors to the Freud museum can also go through the experience that people moving into the vacated homes must have endured long ago. The sight of the "original" space leads them through the lives of those deported on to the lives of the new occupants. Just as today's visitors have no knowledge of the identities of the new inhabitants, so those moving in after 1938 had no knowledge of the identities of the people whose traces they saw on the empty walls. In re-creating this experience the exhibition places the visitor in the situation of the occupants arriving after the neighbours had vanished, provoking a state of confusion, which urges the visitor to connect what he or she knows of the history of culture with the political dimensions in order to find a resolution. While the architectural and collection principles of 19th-century and some 20th-century museums strove to convey permanence

and the representation of necessity beyond history, the space preserved in the Freud museum shows the historicization of this tradition. Not only the documents on display but also the space itself contributes to the personal message.

One floor above the Freud museum, the spectacle of the equivalent experiences of ravage and authenticity paraphrases the starting position of the museum. This is so, since two rooms of the Freud museum are empty, the consulting room and the study. Or rather, they are filled with the enlargements of Engelman's photographs and since the young photographer attempted to cover the apartment in his photos from Freud's viewpoint as well, the enlargements fit together into a panorama picture of the apartment of the time. The re-creation of the authenticity of the empty space is a traumatizing museological experience. What the Die Couch does, is make public the marks left by the unknown family that has just now moved out of this apartment, which is currently used as a museum. That is, it creates a personal experience, a perceptible evidence of what happened a generation before for those living in the age of postmemory. The personal marks, the lost neighbours, the traces of the now unidentified inhabitants are disturbingly familiar, as if what had happened decades ago was now being repeated. The abstract and sterile documents of the great history of culture and the intimate traces of an unknown life are seen side by side. Well, this is what it looks like when others, strangers, take the place of someone we knew. This is what our world looks like, the others of times to come will no doubt be equally unconcerned when we are gone. Photos of the couches of contemporary American analysts decorate the walls, which further increases the tension. Reproductions of unfamiliar and protected private spaces in a room where history did not provide protection. The trauma caused by the sight of an abandoned apartment turns into an abstraction, the sensory experience becomes transcendental, the starting point of a path of remembering and reminiscing. The theatrical intention of the archaeological arrangement becomes evident here. The psychotherapy schools of the early 20th century, the contexts of the history of medicine and culture appear one after another in this space. The veranda summons up images of light therapy, the bathroom those of water therapy, the spaces of transparency and claustrophobia are built in unison. The two tales—that of psychiatry and that of the Holocaust—share this space abundant in curious effects. The

medical sterility of the white stage over the wooden floor is in sharp contrast with the world of “talking cure” wrapped in oriental carpets, with an also oriental couch standing in the centre. These empty spaces are clearly distinct from the closed world of Freud’s consulting room. The two kinds of intention: the relativization of cultural history and the traumatization of political history fortify each other and come together in a single radical mapping, in a spatial and visual display and design system. Each step on the stage, the viewing of each poster and cubicle is an act of intrusion into the private space of a stranger’s life. The two experiences are inseparable. The visitor thus becomes an accomplice and the museum turns into a memorial of the crime scene (Tatort).

The empty space, the “void architecture,” this representation of the Holocaust evokes the Jüdisches Museum of Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind,¹³ the corridors where the museum experience is in its essence provided by the spatial appreciation of the fragmentum rather than by the narrative of the exhibits. In the catalogue of the 2003 exhibition, Heidemarie Uhl’s radical wording says: “With the Bergasse 19-linked palimpsest of narrations, a new motif is entered into: Above and beyond the levels of meaning of the ‘birthplace of psychoanalysis’ in the international realm, meaningful, a mere memorial site for an icon of Viennese culture and intellectual history thus is rendered knowable as the crime scene of Austrian complicity with the National Socialist Final Solution.”¹⁴

The transformation of the museum’s milieu followed a different course in London, where the Freud Museum does not bear the social significance of the one in Vienna. Susan Hiller’s 1994 exhibition, *Freud Boxes*, is also indicative of this broader, freer cultural space. It is no coincidence that the exhibits—the conceptual reworking of Freud’s archaeological collection—found a permanent home in Tate Modern, near Mark Dion’s litter-archaeological cabinet of the title *Thames’s dig*, where they are identified in a museological rather than a crime scene context. Another exhibition in London, Vera Frenkel’s

¹³ Cf. Péter GYÖRGY, *Az üres dívány* [The empty couch]. In *Élet és Irodalom*, Vol. 50. No. 17. April 17th, 2006.

¹⁴ Heidemarie UHL, *Berggasse 19. Lesarten eines vielschichtigen Gedächtnisortes*. In *Freuds verschwundene Nachbarn*. pp. 89–103.



Space of psychotherapy
 Die Couch: Vom Denken im Liegen (exhibition)
 © and photo: Gerald Zugmann, 2006



Medical sterility vs. oriental carpet
 Die Couch: Vom Denken im Liegen (exhibition)
 © and photo: Gerald Zugmann, 2006

Body Missing is a different story. This display focuses on the artworks that disappeared in connection with the organising of the future collection of the Hitler museum in Graz, interpreting the aesthetic aspects of restitution in a complex fictional framework. Similar in some respects is the exhibition presenting the literal ghost story of Königsplatz in Munich. The documentation to the Frenkel exhibition relates the story of postponing the opening in Vienna, which also evidences the socio-cultural differences between the two inter-dependent museums. Edward Said's lecture, *Freud and the Non-European*, also provoked an awkward conflict, as it was originally commissioned by the museum in Vienna but when a photograph of the author was published showing him throw a stone at the Israeli wall in the Gaza Strip, which stirred up a scandal, it was delivered in London instead. The Palestinian emigrant Said drew a parallel between his own position and Freud's.

Let us then step back in time and start the archaeological excavation with the bottom layer, that is, the origins of the collection.

The museological place of the Freud collection would probably be similar to that of the houses of Sir John Soane¹⁵ in London and Charles Willson Peale¹⁶ in Philadelphia if it had stayed in Vienna and if its original interpretation had not been overridden by history. In sketching a portrait of Freud as a collector, the fundamental question is clearly the documentation and interpretation of the parallel between psychoanalysis and archaeology, as indeed was done by John Forrester. Freud started his collection at the time of the trauma following his father's death but his interest in antiquity has much deeper roots and this "original cause" is no less important than the obvious parallelism. Freud, just as Warburg, is the son of the age of German Graecophilia, his education at the legendary German Gymnasium was dominated by Philhellenism.

The respect for Greek culture, the Griechentum—including both material inheritance and the language—had already been seen as the metaphor of universality by Goethe and also by Wilhelm von Hum-

¹⁵ *A new description of Sir John Soane's Museum*. Ed. by John N. SUMMERSON. 10th edition. The Trustees, London. 2001.; and Peter THORNTON–Helen DOREY, *A Miscellany of Objects from Sir John Soane's Museum*. Laurence King Publishing, London, 1992.

¹⁶ Susan STEWART, Death and Life, in that Order in the Works of Charles Willson Peale. In *The Cultures of Collecting*, pp. 204–224.

boldt at the time of working out his plans for institutionalised Philhellenism. Graecophilia consists in the acquisition of experience with validity for the modern age. As was shown by Suzanne L. Marchand in her monograph *Down from Olympus*, which analyses the study “*Latium und Hellas oder Betrachtungen über das klassische Alterthum*,” Humboldt believed that “the Greeks had developed the most natural, and at the same time, the most ideal sculpture, poetry that like no other raised reality to ideality, religion stripped of idolatry and idealizing man, universally enviable mores, and polity that fostered good breeding and wealth without plunging itself into oligarchy of plutocracy.”¹⁷ The holism of Philhellenism surfacing in the Gymnasium in accordance with Humboldt’s reforms was still well known by Freud. The worldly *Bildung*, free from the profit principle, is based on *Zwecklosigkeit*, *Innerlichkeit*, *Wissenschaftlichkeit*, that is, nonpurposiveness, inwardness and scholarliness. For a *Bildungsbürger*, that is a child of humanism, modern society and the antique tradition are inseparable: philology, museology, the dissection of texts and objects constitute mediation between *Altertum* and modernity—in close connection with scientific, and secular, chronology and archaeology which had emerged over the 19th century becoming dominant.

The idea of detached, inner scientificity, the atmosphere of research that strove for objectivity brought Freud the promise of relating to cultural institutions, to the modern world. Philhellenism, the humanist *Bildung* promised him, as it promised Aby Warburg, that there would be no need to formally part with their culturally empty heritage: Jewishness; and there would be a place for them in the cultural order of the modern state nevertheless. Because even though Freud was a *ganz gotteslos Jude*, a godless Jew, he had no intention of renouncing his origins, of becoming Christian. Similarly to Warburg, Freud could not come to terms with this thought. On the other hand, Freud himself—whose lack of religious feeling made him indifferent towards Jewish culture, and who experienced all the paradoxes of *Haskala*, the Jewish enlightenment, together with the majority of his generation—would always be seen by the outside world as Jewish, a Jewish doctor, in every momentum of his life and activities. That is, Freud lived in a situation of multiple marginalisation, the determining force of which is

¹⁷ Suzanne L. MARCHAND, *Down from Olympus. Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1790*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 29.

still difficult to deal with today. Sander Gilman highlights the fundamental question of Jewish social being in the late 19th century: the ambivalence between religious and racial perception, which pervaded not only the daily life of the time but also its scientific, medical persuasions.¹⁸ For Jews, denouncing their religion carried the promise of assimilation but in line with the current convictions of natural science they were seen not just as a religious but also as a racial minority by everyday people. This perception did not necessarily involve anti-Semitism—it would be especially unwise to reflect the post-Holocaust experience back to the period of German–Jewish renaissance, which eventually proved to be hopeless but still remains significant today. The bodily determination of Jewish otherness was also shared by Jewish doctors, such as Otto Rank or Freud himself, who regarded talk of Jewish unusualness not as self-evident but rather as an objectively worded scientific question raised in the spirit of Philhellenism.

In interpreting his relationship to Jewishness we must not forget that Freud was a doctor. He worked with bodies, enclosed in a body that was considered to be radically different, deviant, mysterious and especially alien—which now seems absurd—in sexuality. The Jewish nose, the circumcised penis, the legs perceived to be malformed, the genitalia, the supposed deviance of the menstrual cycle were all bodily symptoms of a profound and unshedable otherness. And Freud lived among them: among the Jews. In his daily life he hardly ever met those we call goyim, in the initial period of his sluggishly developing medical practice he met almost exclusively Jews, whether they were patients or colleagues. But Freud did not intend to become primarily or exclusively a hero of Jewry (because he wanted to be a hero, no doubt about that) but a hero of mankind. And that is what he eventually achieved: he gave shape to the most important anthropological experiences of modern society, he brought about a turn in cultural history, his work changed the way we think about ourselves just as the work of Copernicus had done before.

The Greeks provided the way out, the *Bildung* gave the solution, just as they did for Warburg, Bing, Panofsky and Gombrich as well. As Martin S. Bergman¹⁹ and Sander Gilman note, Freud created the

¹⁸ Sander L. GILMAN, *Op. cit.*

¹⁹ Martin S. BERGMANN, Science and Art in Freud's Life and Work. In *Sigmund Freud and Art*. pp. 173–184.

language of psychoanalysis using Greek mythology as a foundation because he hoped that the doctrine of Greek universality, Philhellenism, would show him a path to leave his marginalised standing behind regardless of the everyday gap between Germans and Jewry. Hannibal was the hero of his youth, the Semitic world conqueror who challenges Rome itself, and his paradoxical situation is evident in this dream.

How vain this hope was is conveyed by the citation of Gilman's paradox in the motto. We could similarly cite Charlotte Schoell Glass,²⁰ who showed in connection with Aby Warburg the depth of the influence the anti-Semitism of his age had on Warburg. Warburg, unlike Freud, never discussed his Jewish origin, he concurred with the humanist spirit but watched the institutionalisation of German anti-Semitism with concern.

I believe that Freud's collecting activities and the representation of his own imago both served this purpose, that is, the purpose of becoming free from his marginalised Jewishness. As H. D., or Hilda Doolittle, shows in her book *Tribute to Freud*,²¹ archaeology was not simply a habit but a daily experience. The gods of Greek mythology offered daily sensory links and made it plain for those entering Freud's space that the Viennese Jewish doctor was separated by a vast distance from the image that had been automatically attached to him. As is apparent in the exhibition *Die Couch*, the arrangement of Freud's apartment shows a striking likeness to the screens of Warburg's *Mnemosyne* project, since analysis as a connection network of pathos patterns began precisely where chronology had ended and repression and the memory and faded memory of the extended periods also raise the issue of *Nachleben*. Whatever they thought of each other, Freud and Warburg were in the same boat. Warburg was Bingswanger's patient so Freud could inconspicuously follow the progress of his illness. Although Warburg did not think much of sexuality as an explanatory principle, their life courses and their research questions showed a number of parallels. They both were multiply marginalised and thus both attempted to represent their surroundings as an incontestable, objective scientific space. And in this

²⁰ Charlotte SCHOELL-GLASS, *Aby Warburg und der Antisemitismus. Kulturwissenschaft als Geistespolitik*. Fischer Taschenbuch, Frankfurt am Main, 1998.

²¹ Hilda DOOLITTLE, *Tribute to Freud*. New Directions Publishing House, New York, 1984.

space they tried to appear as other than Jews. A scientist stood behind the antique sculptures and the Jew became invisible. Warburg lived in the house neighbouring the Institute of Cultural Research founded by him. The large oval reading room, the arena of the institute was both the venue of scientific discourses and the presentation of the Mnemosyne project.²² And Warburg's research into memory raises the question of scientificity in the cultural *Nachleben* in the same area and in the same way as Freud's thinking does. They were both offspring of the period of Darwinism and were both Lamarckian,²³ of course. The aftermath of the *Moses* book—that is, its unignorability and its critical analysis—uncovers, similarly to *Pathosformel*, the problems that are raised by the nature and workings of the unconscious mind.²⁴

Freud's collection and its everyday use is therefore an important question. In the civil apartment at Berggasse 19 there are no traces of this curious assemblage, montage, where the working man, the doctor, the leader of the movement represented himself. It is worth noting the agelessness and archaism of this stage. There are no signs of the technological civilization of 1938: there is no radio, no telephone and I know of no photograph where Freud could be seen using modern technology, with the exception of the aeroplane. Berggasse was dominated by the manly world of the turn of the century, since Philhellenism, as also pointed out by John Forrester in connection with Freud's collection, ascribed no role to women.²⁵ Let us remember how confused Freud was in his relationship with Sabina Spielrein.²⁶ The role of a modern, enlightened Jewish woman was written in Berlin, not in Vienna. It is no coincidence that for several research-

²² Aby WARBURG, *Der Bilderatlas Mnemosyne*. Ed. by Martin WARNEKE and Claudia BRINK. Akademie, Berlin, 2005.

²³ Cf. Daniel L. SCHACTER, *Forgotten Ideas. Neglected Pioneers. Richard Semon and the Story of Memory*. Psychology Press, London, 2001.

²⁴ Cf. Yosef Hayim YERUSHALMI, *Freud's Moses*. Yale University Press, New Haven–London, 1991.

²⁵ John FORRESTER, *Op. cit.*, pp. 233 and 251.

²⁶ Martin A. SILVERMAN, *A Secret Symmetry. Sabina Spielrein between Jung and Freud*. In *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. 33, 1985, pp. 205–209; Aldo CAROTENUTO, *A Secret Symmetry. Sabina Spielrein between Jung and Freud*. Trans. by Arno POMERANS, John SHEPLEY and Krishna WINSTON. Pantheon, New York, 1982; John KERR, *A Most Dangerous Method. The Story of Jung, Freud and Sabina Spielrein*. Alfred Knopf, New York, 1993; Alekszandr ETKIND, *Sabina Spielrein. Tiszta játék egy orosz lánnyal [A pure game with a Russian girl]*. In *Thalassa*, 1997/ 2–3. pp. 51–108.

ers Freud's space evoked the timeless space of early museums outside of society. The overcrowding, the unclassifiability of objects may conjure up the images of several curiositat cabinets for the visitor, such as that of Sir John Soane's museum. Fantasy and reality, text and image, sound and visual mark continually commingle, the non-public spaces of the Freud museum of Vienna served at once the purpose of an exclusive stage and a laboratory. These desktop sculptures, the witnesses of imagination, of traceless conversations and silences were given a gallery of their own in 2005.

In the end Freud had no other option but exile, the rare mercy: dying in freedom. His ashes can be found in one of his Greek vases in the Highgate cemetery. As far as the collection was concerned, Maresfield Gardens was dead, as Freud himself noted in two of his letters. Dead, he wrote to Wittgenstein's sister, like its owner will soon be. What could have made Freud think that the collection could not be relocated from Vienna to London? He probably never intended to leave it to the museum, never intended it to be an impersonal heritage. In this respect he was unlike collectors who hide their personalities in their collections and thus pass them on to future generations. Freud had no need for that and he did not build his collection for that purpose. He worked in it, sought ways of uncovering lost pasts, in difficult and hostile surroundings. The antiquities, the sculptures served the self same purpose as the Greek metaphoricity, the classical language of psychoanalysis did: concealing the Jew, making Jewishness unperceivable. "Freud's creation of this new language, indeed his entire creation of an abstract metapsychology, can be seen as an effort to form an alternative language to German given the latter's built-in depreciation of and menace toward the Jew... The assimilative Jew was thus essentially provided with another language. In this fashion, metapsychology replaced the void left by the loss of Yiddish and Hebrew, it allowed the Jew to transcend to some slight degree the German tongue's world view."²⁷ The Jew of emancipation used Greekness as a protective shield and as a common language. And when his attempt to hide behind the language and the collection eventually failed, and there remained neither Haskala nor Aufklärung, only Jewishness again, which was reason enough to be killed, the collection, now in London, became nothing but a collection. An

²⁷ Sander L. GILMAN, *Op. cit.*, pp. 111–112.

empty, confused archaeological collection full of counterfeits, which had no interest whatsoever for Freud in itself. The godless scientist, the philhellene humanist was driven away from Vienna and it was the Jew who arrived in London. The rewriter of the unfinished Moses book. The London preface adeptly defines the position of the godless and culturally indifferent Jew within the tradition. Because the anti-racist scientist, as John Forrester points out, collected antique objects and Jewish jokes. "Freud's project is an example of his positive reaction to the bind of race and science that he was placed in. His strong belief in the emancipation nature of science, his questioning of religion as a social institution and a psychological state, his refusal to disavow his sense of Jewish identity, his need to create a new and freer space for his intellectual pursuits are all creative responses to the constitution of the world in which he found himself."²⁸

Well, the two museums, like the two sides of a coin, work together in creating the whole of the Freud tradition. The rooms where the trauma was once revealed, where Freud exposed what had happened to the patients under analysis, where countless voices found understanding silence mean something quite different today. The trauma is ours, those living in the world of postmemory, whose cultural shock lies in disappearance. Freud's apartment was once the non-public scene of discovering complex interconnections, of bringing about a cultural turn. All that disappeared in a single moment. The civilization, the sculptures, the words, the silences, the images. They left no marks behind them and the indifference of the next occupant is a serious warning. This is how the abstract notion of the Holocaust becomes experienceable; the trauma of disappearance is also a source of aesthetic experience, as demonstrated by Longo's pictures. Because Freud finally became a stranger in the house where he used to live: a swastika decorated the doorway where he had entered every day. The world where he had once felt at home, marginalised but in the hope of emancipation, turned him into a stranger: the emptiness of the museum in Vienna points to this state of deprivation, which is made altogether unmistakeable by the display of Die Couch. London (a life-long temptation) welcomed him but he had no time to resolve the question that he had failed to find an answer for in Vienna. The

²⁸ John FORRESTER, *Op. cit.*, p. 234.



The couch of Freud

© Freud Museum London

two museums show their real visage together: the reality of a Jew in exile. Those who see the empty spaces in Vienna are on a walk in Pompeii, as the volcanic eruption preserved the shapes of one-time life and recalled their steps. Pompeii extorts the experience of *Gradiva*, the hour of the dead and *Saxa Loquuntur*—just what happens to visitors in this museum, although here it is not the stones but their absence that speaks up. Freud called his daughter, Anna, Antigone. The European researcher, the rejected German who remained a Jew, the man who saw Oedipus as his hero, ended his life in Colonus. *Saxa tamen non loquuntur*.

The empty couch

PSYCHOanalysis.

Freud exhibition in the Jüdisches Museum, Berlin

When in 1989 Daniel Libeskind finally won the competition for the architectural designs of the institution that has become known worldwide as the Jewish Museum (Jüdisches Museum), he was commissioned to create a Jewish Museum Wing as part of Berlin City Museum (Jüdisches Museum im Stadtmuseum Berlin).¹ The two names are the reminders of a dispute that lasted decades.² A historical exhibition on German or, more precisely, Berlin Jewry housed in a separate, independent building conveys a different message from the same exhibition housed in a wing of a city museum. The first Jewish museum of Berlin opened in 1933, a week before Hitler was appointed Chancellor, not far from the location of the present museum, in the block of the New Synagogue (Neue Synagoge)³ in 29 Oranienburger Strasse, which has also been recently refurbished. The architectural arrangement of the present museum also displays signs of the debate, since the building is made up of two parts. The new building is Libeskind's deconstructive, critical spatial construct regarded as the architectural realization of loss and emptiness, while the old building is the Baroque palace of Kollegienhaus built in 1735, ruined in the Second World War and reconstructed in 1963, where a

¹ James E. YOUNG, The Uncanny Arts of Memorial Architecture. In James E. Young, *At the Memory's Edge. After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*. Yale University Press, New Haven–London, 2003; Andreas HUYSEN, The Voids of Berlin. In *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2003.

² Martina WEINLAND–Kurt WINKLER, *Das Jüdische Museum im Stadtmuseum Berlin. Eine Dokumentation*. Nicolai, Berlin, 1997.

³ On the night of 9th November, 1938, the pogrom of Reichskristallnacht, the personal courage of the district police officer, Wilhelm Krützfeld, saved the building from demolition.

city museum was later installed. The building designed by Daniel Libeskind, the architect who was born in 1946 in Łódź from a Jewish Polish family, had outstanding talents as a musician and studied to become an architect under the guidance of Peter Eisenman in the United States, has become one of the internationally recognized architectural reference objects in Berlin.⁴

In the architectural shaping of the capital city of reunited Germany, the question of remembering the Third Reich and the extermination of German and European Jewry were essential issues of absolute priority. For this reason, those who visit Berlin today cannot avoid encountering sites of reminiscence and commemoration. The appearance of some 2,700 symbolic tombstones forming the *Holocaust Mahnmal* designed by Peter Eisenman and the attached information centre erected in the very centre of the city, beside the old National Socialist administration quarter—the Chancellery, the Brandenburg Gate, Hotel Adlon—around Wilhelmstrasse has most certainly redefined the image and self-image of Berlin. The memorial—the erection of which was preceded by a long public debate concerning not only its architectural realization, size and location but also the name it should be given—is a manifestation of the political decision that the *state* considers guarding the memory of the Holocaust to be inseparable from the identity policy of German society.⁵ The open air museum of *Topographie des Terrors*⁶ is located in the immediate neighbourhood of the Mahnmal, at the site of the former Gestapo headquarters and prison. It is another vacant space, another reminder evoked by the experience of the emptiness left behind. The existence of this museum also alludes to the battle the left-wing community of the former West Berlin fought for the establishment of public commemoration. The reconstruction designs of the Reichstag bear the name of the Englishman Sir Norman Foster. The present German parliament building also carries a critique of the architecture of the Third Reich; its present shaping, also developed through a lengthy public debate, with the open glass dome wraps the functional build-

⁴ Karen E. TILL, *The New Berlin. Memory, Politics, Place*. Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis–London, 2005.

⁵ The Mahnmal is not simply a site of peaceful remembrance, it is rather a site of reproach.

⁶ *Topographie des Terrors. Gestapo, SS und Reichssicherheitshauptamt auf dem "Prinz-Albrecht-Gelände."* Eine Dokumentation. Ed. by Frank DINGEL, Thomas FRIEDRICH, Klaus HESSE and Reinhard RÜRUP. Willmuth Arenhövel, Berlin, 2000.



Jewish Museum, Berlin

Designed by Daniel Libeskind, exterior perspective

Photo: Péter Lovas, 2008

ding of daily political activities in a frame of remembrance. As if the notions that also surface throughout Freud's work, the numerous metaphors of remembering were competing with one another in the public spaces of present day Berlin. For one, archaeology keeps popping up; we do not need to dig deep into the past of Berlin to chance upon traces of the Third Reich. Then there are the spirits, the ghosts of abandoned places; Libeskind himself found it of crucial importance that the spatial design of the museum building laden with several imprints left by cultural history should be indicative of the irredeemable and unrecoverable loss.⁷ The task was to unwrap the trauma of what had happened between 1933 and 1938, when German Jewry—without moving anywhere—suddenly found themselves in an alien environment, as if in a diaspora, and to lay it out for the museum visitor.⁸ The way the museum is presented is in itself a verdict on the co-existence of Germans and Jews. The urban representation of the story of the Holocaust is not simply a question of political acknowledgement but a means of shaping the *current* cultural space of the city. Berlin lives under the spell of various stories, untold pasts and continual reconstructions: the need for a *recountable history*, for a *common narrative* is manifest in the reconstruction of the urban *space*. But Berlin could not begin reconstructing its own past until it entered the period of “postmemory”—to use the term coined by Marianne Hirsch⁹—with respect to the Holocaust. The profound melancholy that stems from the recognition that the irredeemable loss remains a day-to-day experience is undoubtedly closely related to the critique of Berlin remembrance policy and the Jüdisches Museum as expressed by the contemporary German Jewish community. This is not purely about making history hyper-real or about the universal issue of *disneyfication*. The title of an essay by Hungarian born German Jewish Richard Schneider speaks for itself: “*The Jews under the glass: the problem of being an exhibition object*.”¹⁰ The inhabitants of the global media space

⁷ Daniel LIBESKIND, Between the Lines. Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum. In *Assemblage*, No. 12. August 1990, pp. 18–57.

⁸ V. Sarah FRAIMAN, The Transformation of Jewish Consciousness in Nazi Germany as reflected in the German Jewish Journal: Der Morgen, 1925–1938. In *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 20. No. 1. 2000, pp. 41–59.

⁹ Marianne HIRSCH, *Family Frames. Photography Narrative and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1997.

¹⁰ Richard Schneider, The Jew under glass: the problem of being an exhibition object. In *European Judaism*, Vol. 36. No. 2, 2003, pp. 26–33.

who take the pilgrimage to Berlin do not necessarily sense any of this *German Jewish* tension, of course, and they may not be aware of local Jews feeling excluded from decisions of remembrance policy.¹¹ But having the first director of the museum, Amnon Barzel, resign was, for instance, a manifestation of discontent with being locked into a museum existence. The Israeli curator who specialises in modern art envisaged the Jüdisches Museum as an institution of the *present* with a mission not restricted to the technically often magnificent and highly sophisticated presentation of the German Jewish past. I found Barzel's approach to be much closer to the aura of the Libeskind building with its allusions to the broken Star of David, the concentration camp, ruins, fragments and the lack of narrativity—that is, to Jewry as defined by Auschwitz—than the currently displayed historical recountal. Amnon Barzel's artistic vision is represented, for instance, by controversial memorial policies, a characteristic example of which is Rachel Whitehead's work erected in Jüdisches Platz in Vienna.¹²

The exhibition organized by Hürlimann & Lepp of Berlin in the Jüdisches Museum on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Freud's birth reflects the dilemma mentioned in connection with Barzel's work in a number of respects: from the perspective of historical and contemporary political tensions as well as in the domain of representation. The exhibition follows the route of *disneyfication* in its title and in its entire design but undoubtedly meets the spirit of psychoanalysis in that it *passes over* several issues which would certainly deserve the attention of political history telling. Both the title—*PSYCHOanalyse. Sigmund Freud zum 150. Geburtstag*—and the implementation are cleverly amusing; the exhibition provides as much occasion for cheerful laughter as it does for contemplation and melancholy. The visual design of the display is built around a single potent idea. As the visitor enters the room, she is first met with a sliced birthday cake of gigantic proportions and after manoeuvring around it, she finds herself in front of a maze of colourful neon signs set up in the style of American billboards of the

¹¹ Miriam HAARDT, *Zwischen Schandmal und nationaler Sinnstiftung. Die Debatte um das Holocaust-Mahnmal in Berlin*. Universität Bremen, Bremen, 2001.

¹² Barzel was a member of the international panel which chose Whitehead's memorial. Similar debates took place in Budapest in connection with the Holocaust Museum in Páva street. The conception represented by Livia Páldi—which was eventually displayed in Trafó art club—was simply too much for those who were worried about the museum becoming the centre of a controversy.

fifties. Each sign marks a concept defined, re-interpreted or favoured by Freud: for instance, fetishism, hysteria, dream, anal phase, Oedipus complex, joke, trauma, repression, sublimation. The idea is as effective as it is simple: meandering among the concepts and the various toys demonstrating their meanings and cultural uses, the visitor—whether she has read Freud or not; whether she is hostile to psychoanalysis or indifferent—cannot help acknowledging that the vocabulary and metaphor-stock of our culture today are to a dramatic extent based on Freud's revolutionary work. Making the visitor aware of this basic fact could be one outcome to make the exhibition worth its while; it is an entirely different question that the curious contradiction which could have been the object of the display all by itself is not even mentioned. Namely, the fact that while the original line of the psychoanalytic movement with its scientific status is virtually dead today and even its reformed versions are met with endless criticism and self-criticism, its significance as a force of influence and the metaphorical phraseology it created have been basic assumptions in historical consciousness and self-reflection ever since. We have all emerged from Freud's mantle regardless of our attitudes towards Freudism, the cultural practice of our age is literally uninterpretable without him.

The exhibition also appears to be blind to the compelling fact that the narrative which permitted the creation of the Jüdisches Museum constitutes a chapter of the paradigm change which has transformed the Holocaust—in accordance with the outlook of the post-war years—from an event of political history into a universal moral parable, a universal trauma. That is: the description and interpretation of the Holocaust and the relationship between Germans and Jews is some kind of public self-analysis; everything that has taken place in Germany over the past decades in connection with the memory of the Holocaust can only be put into words through Freud's terminology and norms. For instance, the work of psychoanalyst and social psychologist Alexander Mitscherlich is acclaimed for uncovering the causes of the inability to mourn—a question of special significance for post-war Germany. His text *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (*The inability to mourn: Principles of collective behavior*)¹⁵ offered help for many in understanding the causes of

¹⁵ Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern. Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens*, Piper, Munich, 1967.



Sliced birthday cake

PSYCHOanalyse Sigmund Freud zum 150. Geburtstag (exhibition)

© Jewish Museum Berlin

Photo: Jens Ziehe



Colourful neon signs

PSYCHOanalyse Sigmund Freud zum 150. Geburtstag (exhibition)

© Jewish Museum Berlin

Photo: Jens Ziehe

their decades-long silence. But curiously, the organisers of the exhibition also chose not to reflect on the question of how and why Freud—who was a completely godless Jew, in his own words—experienced the heritage that determined his existence. It is true that the only *severed* piece of the exhibited cake is the one representing Freud's emigration but this is surely not enough to do justice to his last great achievement: to the last Moses, shocking from a Jewish perspective, which was completed in London by the author who had been marked as a dissenter, as “different” in his own country. Freud chose emigration to write and to die free. The decision of the Jüdisches Museum in Berlin to leave the dilemmas and controversies between Freud and Jewish identity and tradition unmentioned is at best comical. The exhibition boasts another great idea: a series of photographs depicting the couches of contemporary German psychoanalysts and the “views” from them, which is also left without critical commentary. Some space could really have been sacrificed to devote a few words and images to the history of the psychoanalytic movement in Berlin. Partly because at the time of the Weimar Republic, the new political context of psychoanalysis in the Electropolis,¹⁴ a city considerably more modern and more dynamic than Vienna, was not only alien to Freud but also decidedly worrisome. He was greatly troubled by the strong left-wing sentiments—at times a clear communist commitment, as in the case of Wilhelm Reich—of the analysts in Berlin. It was no coincidence that Freud himself, to use a phrase that would not exist without him, kept his distance from all kinds of left-wing movement. If a Freud exhibition displayed in Berlin passes over the Psychoanalytische Poliklinik opened in 1920, it could only do so by some kind of mistake. Some mention of the Nazis appropriating German psychoanalysis would have been even more important: a “de-freuded,” Jewless psychoanalysis and therapy was carried on to a certain extent in the Göring Institute at the time of the Third Reich.¹⁵ The lack of mention of circumstances of this kind, which also carry current political tensions, results in an exhibition literally hovering in time and space; this presentation of psychoanalysis is

¹⁴ Andreas KILLEN, *Berlin Electropolis. Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 2006.

¹⁵ Geoffrey COCKS, *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich. The Göring Institute*. Oxford University Press, Oxford–London, 1985; and Edith KURZWEIL, Psychiatry, Psychotherapies, and Psychology in the Third Reich. In *Psychoanalytic Review*, Vol. 88. No. 2. April 2001, pp. 245–274.

reminiscent of the parodical hyper-realism of an American television comedy more than anything else.

The approach of the catalogue texts contradicts the exhibition in some respects. The essay *Die Fehlende Couch. Museum, Blick, Psychoanalyse* (*The missing couch. Museum, View, Psychoanalysis*) by Hamburg psychoanalyst and art historian, Karl Joseph Pazzini, for instance, discusses the fundamental questions every possible Freud exhibition and museum might address. The cultural history of psychoanalysis is difficult to reconstruct through objects since it perpetuates the spoken and written documents and interpretations of the memories imagination and fantasies leave behind. And this is *the very reason*, of course, why each artefact is so important: Freud's collection of antiques and the objects from Berggasse 19, Freud's home. These objects—including the legendary couch—can now be seen in Freud's last home in Maresfield Gardens in London's Hampstead. Pazzini starts his essay with the anecdote of the puzzled visitor to the Freud museum in Vienna: "where is the couch?" In London since 1938. "*Aber letztes Mal, als ich hier war, da stand sie noch da*" (*But last time I visited it was still here*). If the visitor's story is taken to be a *case*, it is easily diagnosed. What could this be about? Are they hallucinating? Imagining things? And what do these words really mean?

It suddenly becomes apparent that unconstrainable imagination and unintended remembering are silenced without the objects or the images of the objects that elicit them. But for those who wander in the empty spaces of Berggasse, the couch is there. The couch is a peculiar object. It is the silent witness of every word ever said: the words of love and of fear of death. A Freud exhibition in Berlin, in the Jüdisches Museum can create the illusion that *PSYCHOanalyse* partly creates. But notwithstanding every topical joke and aptly arranged historical narrative, the Freud exhibition, and also the museum as a whole, does in fact evoke just the sensation which was originally intended by Libeskind and which was accurately noted by Jacques Derrida in a letter he wrote to Peter Eisenman in connection with the designs of the building:¹⁶ the *horror vacui* of a vacated, bare space. The frightening silence of corridors leading from nowhere to nowhere. Because this ground once bore the weight of people who

¹⁶ Jacques DERRIDA, A Letter to Peter Eisenman. In *Assemblage*, No. 12. August 1990, pp. 6–13.

were denied the right to die free; all those Jews who had no share of the privilege that was granted to Freud; all those whose death remains unrecountable for ever. Because it happened but there was no tale to tell. This building shelters the ghostly memory of all those who left this world without a chance of being remembered. The phoney cheerfulness of the Freud exhibition hides the shadows of *what cannot be told*; that which surfaces again and again in Libeskind's brilliant critical space. The exhibition talks about distress with the irony of cultural history while the building creates it.

Amnon Barzel organized the exhibition *Place for Self* in the Church Street Apexart gallery in New York's Soho in 2004, well past its heyday. The exhibition explored the theme of the unseizable home which exists within the self—a home which promises shelter for fugitives, for those on the run as well. The exhibition featured artists from Israel, the US, Italy, Poland and Albania. Cosmopolitan and outcast artists. If I followed the debate between the German authorities and Barzel about the Jüdisches Museum correctly and if my interpretation of the 2004 exhibition is right, they were about the same principle. Who could the Jews feel solidarity with if not with other outcasts? And is it not true that the memory of the Holocaust urges both the survivors and those who were born after the war to feel compassion for those who do not have a home and may never have one. The fugitives of all times, the “scum” of the Earth, are every Jew's brothers. Because if you must flee, if the home becomes just an illusion, it does not matter who is Jewish and who is not.

Frederik Ruysch, Sigmund Freud, Osip Mandelstam

(Necrorealism in Petropolis)

*“But if Petersburg is not the capital, then there is no Petersburg.
It only appears to exist.”*

(Andrei Bely: Petersburg)¹

*I returned to my city that I know like my tears,
Like my veins, like childhood’s swollen glands*

*You’ve come back here, so swallow at once
The cod liver oil of Leningrad’s river lamps,*

*Recognize, right away, the brief December day,
Egg yolk commingled with ominous tar.*

*Petersburg! I’m not yet ready to die!
You’ve still got my telephone numbers.*

*Petersburg! I still have the addresses
Where I can call on the speech of the dead.*

*I live on a back staircase, and the clapper
Yanked out with flesh hits me in the temple,*

*And all night through I wait for precious guests,
Rattling like shackles the chains on the doors.*

Osip Mandelstam: Leningrad²

¹ Andrei BELY, *Petersburg*. Translated, annotated and introduced by Robert A. MAGUIRE and John E. MALMSTADT. Indiana University Press, Bloomington–London, 1978, p. 2.

² O.E. MANDELSTAM, Leningrad. In *From the Ends to the Beginning. A Bilingual Anthology*

For the stranger, every city remains *invisible*,³ with unexposable secrets crouching in its many spaces and at the depths of its history. The complex web of cultural spaces, the topmost layer of the city palimpsest⁴ only reveals as much as the traveller can decipher for himself, what his eyes can see. I have merely been a traveller in St Petersburg, Petrograd, Leningrad, Petropolis⁵; and so this essay is no more than an attempt at interpreting a *single* object, Freud's Dream Museum⁶ (henceforth: the Museum) created by Viktor Mazin in 1999.

The cultural and social history of a city is contingent on the role attributed to its museums—provided they have a role at all.⁷ St Petersburg is an artificially made city, it was created by an enlightened ruler's will; its museums and collections have had a major role both in its foundation and throughout its cultural and social history. St Petersburg tale(s) and myths cannot be told without the museums and vice versa: the critical history of the city (and of Russia and the Soviet Union) can be recreated in a museum as we have witnessed in the film *Russian Ark* directed by Alexander Sokurov in 2003. Tarkovsky's disciple presents Russian history as it stands after history has completed its work, in the present of a "posthistoire," in a single unedited shot taken in the Hermitage. The series of still lives, fictitious scenes of history and pseudo-documentary episodes are woven

of *Russian Verse*. Trans. by Tatiana Tulchinsky, Andrew Wachtel, and Gwenan Wilbur. <http://www.russianpoetry.net>

³ Cf. Italo CALVINO, *Invisible Cities*. Harcourt Publishers, New York, 1978.

⁴ Andreas HUYSEN, *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford University Press, Stanford (California), 2003.

⁵ The Hellenized name of the city was used by the Russian Classicist poets Lomonosov, Derzhavin and Pushkin and, in their footsteps, by Mandelstam. Cf. Leonid I. STRAKHOVSKY, Osip Mandelstam – The Architect of Words. In: *Russian Review*, Vol. 7. No. 1. August, 1947, pp. 61–70; and Ryszard PRZYBYLSKI, *An Essay on the Poetry of Osip Mandelstam. God's Grateful Guest*. Trans. by Madeline G. LEVINE, Ardis, Ann Arbor, 1987, pp. 139–143; Osip MANDELSTAM: In Petropolis, translucent, we shall die. Trans. by Gregory FREIDIN In Gregory Freidin, *A Coat of Many Colors*. The University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987.

⁶ On the history of the museum see: Viktor MAZIN: Freud's Dream Museum. In *Kabinet K. Skifiya*, 2004.

⁷ See for instance Germain BAZIN on Munich: "The European city in which the museum played the greatest role in the municipal fabric is unquestionably Munich. The city itself is a museum, inspired by the nostalgia for Italy and Greece that troubled the spirit of King Louis I of Bavaria, already enamored of antiquities and archeology when still a crown prince." *The Museum Age*. Trans. by Jane van Nuis CAHILL. Desoer, Brussels, 1967, p. 198.

together by a double layer narration: the dialogue between the invisible commentator (the voice of Sokurov) and the actor portraying a 19th century traveller, the Marquis de Custine⁸ and unnoticed monologues. Equating history with the story of the museum, the Hermitage, targets one of St Petersburg's characteristic cultural myths, the dichotomy of the artificially created Western versus the authentic Russian cultures.⁹ The film at the same time has a parody, a sophisticated travesty of this mythical duality embedded in it. Furthermore—as Dragan Kujundzic points out—it highlights a contradiction which is particularly important from our perspective. The Hermitage is a *Russian* museum while its collection—which carries an at least twofold meaning in accordance with the film's context—is European, Western or, to put it differently, alien. “The dramatic tension of the movie as it pertains to the question of identification (and the Russian national identity, for example), lies in the fact that the space of commemoration relies also on artefacts that have nothing to do with Russia, but are entirely imported from the West, and thus, structurally from without this “site of memory.”¹⁰

St Petersburg is thus a place where the normative meaning of authenticity or cultural homogeneity is vacuous. Neither the museums nor the city can exist without the cultural practice of exchange, transfer and adaptation.

In this respect the Hermitage is simply the monumental recreation of the first Russian museum, the scientific collection *Kunstkamera* founded by Peter the Great. The *Kunstkamera*—which brought together, among other objects, curiosities of science and natural history from the personal collection of Peter the Great—is now located on Vasilievsky Island with the twelve college buildings of the uni-

⁸ Marquis de CUSTINE, *Letters from Russia. Russia in 1839*. (Latest edition: *Letters from Russia*/ Astolphe de Custine. The 1843 Translation. Ed. by Anka MUHLSTEIN. The New York Review of Books, New York, 2002.)

⁹ Cf. Rolf HELLEBUST, The Real St. Petersburg. In *Russian Review*, No. 62. 2003/October. pp. 495–507; and, cited by Hellebust, J. M. LOTMAN–B. A. USPENSKII, Binary Models in the Dynamics of Russian Culture (to the End of the Eighteenth Century). In *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*. Ed. by Alexander D. NAKHIMOVSKY and Alice Stone NAKHIMOVSKY. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1985.

¹⁰ Dragan KUJUNDZIC, After “After” The Arkive Fever of Alexander Sokurov. In *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, Vol. 21. No. 3, 2004, pp. 219–239, and Kriss RAVETTO-BIAGIOLI, Floating on the Borders of Europe Sokurov's “Russian Ark”. In *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 59. No. 1, 2005, pp. 18–26.

versity also established by the tsar.¹¹ Peter bought the largest part of the natural history collection in 1717 in Amsterdam from a German born apothecary-collector, Albert Seba, and from Dr Frederick Ruysch, the anatomist known throughout Europe for his work in anatomical preservation. The art of Ruysch stems from the tradition of public anatomical dissection;¹² the documentation of his understanding of the human body and the representation of baroque morality and the death cult are inseparable aspects of his work. His pedagogical intentions were simultaneously directed towards the discovery and unravelling of as yet unknown secrets of the human body and towards the expansion of the still lives of *vanitas*. Ruysch's anatomical still lives—artworks created in the spirit of necrorealism,¹³ to use the terminology of the contemporary avant-garde movement in St Petersburg—follow the intentions and influencing forces of determent and curiosity, entertainment and education. Ruysch, however, did not stop at creating dramatic arrangements of emblematic, judgmental skeleton compositions in order to satisfy his audience's eagerness to learn and to be awed. He used the preparation technique he had developed to lay bare preserved colourful human body parts.¹⁴ Ruysch's collector interests extended to anatomical deviations—which were regarded as monsters at the time. Several abnormalities can be found among the preparations preserved in enormous glass cabinets, which continue to attract the astounded attention of St Petersburg audiences to the present day. The powerful arrangement, the mora-

¹¹ The building, which was designed by two Russian architects, Matarnovy and Zemstov, completed in 1727 and which is currently under interior reconstruction, is a magnificent example for architectural interpretation. The building satisfies the expectations of its era while at the same time elegantly encompassing the tradition of the amphitheatre spaces of anatomical theatres.

¹² Jonathan SAWDAY, *The body emblazoned. Dissection and the human body in Renaissance culture*. Routledge, London–New York, 1995; Andrea CARLINO, *Books of the body. Anatomical ritual and the Renaissance learning*. Chicago University Press, Chicago–London, 1999; and Deanna PETHERBRIDGE–Ludmilla JORDANOVA, *The Quick and the Dead. Artists and Anatomy*. University of California, Berkeley, 1998. I saw the Geneva version of the exhibition: *Corps à vif. Art et anatomie*. Ed. by Deanna PETHERBRIDGE, Claude RITSCHARD and Andrea CARLINO. Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva. 1998.

¹³ Viktor MAZIN, Excerpts from “Cabinet of Necrorealism. Iufit and”. In *Necrorealism. Contexts, History, Interpretations*. Ed. by Seth GRAHAM. Pittsburgh Russian Film Symposium, Pittsburgh, 2001, pp. 28–53. <http://www.rusfilm.pitt.edu/booklets/Necro.pdf>

¹⁴ The anatomical wax models of “La Specola” in Florence are to some extent similar, see Marta POGGESI, The Wax Figure Collection in “La Specola” in Florence. In *Encyclopaedia Anatomica. A Collection of Anatomical Waxes*. Taschen, Cologne, 2006.

lity play of human bodies also featured in the glass cabinets encasing malformed fetuses. In some of the preparations Ruysch inserted glass eyes into the empty eye sockets, the sight of which, while it undoubtedly conveyed a different message to the minds of past centuries, is in my experience still rather disturbing today.¹⁵

Peter the Great first purchased Ruysch's collection and then sought to integrate it into Russian traditions: he passed decrees and offered rewards in an attempt to expand the collection with local specimens. The anatomy cabinet was and still is surrounded by an expanding ethnological and anthropological collection and, while the significance of the *Kunstkamera* obviously does not compare to either the Hermitage or the Russian Museum in the eyes of foreign visitors, there always is a long winding queue of people outside the building. The *Kunstkamera* fits nicely into the tradition chronicled by Viktor Mazin when he constructed the culture-historical archaeology of necrorealism: "First, from the moment of its founding (if we can speak of the founding of something whose "foundation" was a swamp), Petersburg has been shrouded in the gloom of apocalyptic legends and prophecies. Second, the city was founded, as we know, on the corpses of its own builders. Third, the literary text of St. Petersburg (commonly known as a city that is more powerful and repressive than hypothetical or real, a city to which no one ever succeeds in breaking through, a city that simply does not exist in the common sense of the word) is saturated with mystical portraits of paranoid raving, covered with masks of death, filled with images of eternal doubles and suicides."¹⁶

The implementation of Mazin's museum must have been greatly influenced by the space grid resulting from the artificial nature of the city. The unbroken geometric order and the sea view simultaneously create an impression of infinite empty spaces and a sensation of entrapment; an agora and claustrophobia exist here side by side. "There is an infinity of rushing prospects with an infinity of

¹⁵ Cf. Julie V. HANSEN, *Resurrecting Acting Death: Anatomical Art in the Cabinet of Dr. Frederik Ruysch*. In *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 78. No. 4. 1996/Dec., pp. 663–679; and Anthony ANEMONE, *The Monsters of Peter the Great. The Culture of the St. Petersburg Kunstkamera in the Eighteenth Century*. In *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 44. No. 4. 2000/Winter, pp. 583–602.

¹⁶ Viktor MAZIN, *Experts...* Trans. by Maria JETT. In *Necrorealism. Contexts, History, Interpretations*. Ed. by Seth Graham, p. 38.

rushing, intersecting shadows. All of Petersburg is an infinity of the prospect raised to the *n*th degree.”¹⁷ The virtually exclusive domination of geometry over the traditional urban space provides an opportunity to experience the world of surrealism, to capture the sensation of claustrophobia, the eerie feeling of entrapment. And we must remember that the structures of architecture always possess a metaphorical meaning: they are the metaphors of political history. In his probably ground breaking analysis of the cultural representations of St Petersburg entitled *Images of Space*, Grigory Kaganov mentions the works of Alexander Zhivayev, including the drawing *Private House* (from the series *Fantasies on the Theme of the City* 1985).¹⁸ The pencil drawing, which at first glance appears to be an illusion trap evoking the closed infinity of Escher’s false perspectives, presents and reveals the connections between cultural history and spatial structure to the patient viewer—or perhaps we could say to the patient reader in this case...

The lower tier of the picture shows a projection of St Petersburg partitioned by its canals viewed from above. The drawing imitates the style of 19th century panorama paintings. This image presumably has a “local” reading (for those who can identify points on the map); the outsider sees “the” barely identifiable block of buildings standing on the canal banks. It is a phantasmagoria; knowledge assembled from personal impressions, experiences and map reading, which we all have of spaces where we never have been and never will be at home. In Zhivayev’s picture, however, the space above the panorama of canal banks is not filled by the sky but by resident blocks on a different scale, a different space grid with a clever transition between the two. Blocks familiar from St Petersburg tower towards one another in a way nothing to do with reality. The ambiguity of the two palaces viewed from below on the right of the picture offers further readings: in one reading the buildings are *floating* in the sky and we see their floor plans from underneath. In the other reading the bottom view of the palaces looks like a flat roof, with its chimneys too, if we turn the picture 180 degrees around. The double interpretation is reinforced by two giant lampposts. Nevertheless, the

¹⁷ Andrei BELY, *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.

¹⁸ Grigory KAGANOV, *Images of Space. St. Petersburg in the Visual and Verbal Arts*. Trans. by Sidney MONAS. Stanford University Press, Stanford (California), 1997, Image 1, p. 175.

picture is by no means a closed system of perceptual traps: Zhivayev uses visual ambiguity in only one part of the drawing. The double reading or perception is decisive in the top tier of the picture: unidentifiable architectural pieces frame the sky—in conformity with the structural principles of the northern perspective feigning randomness—reaching beyond the edge of the picture both on the right and on the left. The lower part of an arch catches the eye on the right and we appear to be looking behind an open curtain on the left. The duality of reality and illusion is present here; the same experience lies behind Mazin's necrorealism study and behind the movement started in the 1980s in Leningrad: the duality of those dead and those present. A necrorealist is always an illusionist; for him psychological reality is inseparable from social reality, as are dreams from perception and events from memories. But could this picture have an alternative view? Is what we see not the underworld? Is this confinement not ghostly, is the sky not an illusion? And is this duality not characteristic of St Petersburg: the duality of the infinite and the enclosed, the empty and the unbreakable? Thinking of Bely and Mandelstam, all this seems to be right. The proximity of Petropolis and Necropolis is not just a play on words. Bely's and Mandelstam's texts about the city, the myth of the inseparability of the city and the underworld become a tangible experience in the museum. The structured design and the geometric space grid do not drive the ghostliness out of the history of the city; the past surfaces now and again.

*“In Petropolis, translucent, we shall die
Where Proserpine reigns over us.
With each breath we drink the mortal air,
And each hour is for us death's hour.
Oh Sea Goddess, formidable Athena,
Take down your mighty stone helmet.
In Petropolis, translucent, we shall die—
Here reigns over us, not you, but Proserpine.”*¹⁹

¹⁹ Osip MANDELSTAM, *In Petropolis, translucent, we shall die*. Trans. by Gregory Freidin, in Gregory Freidin, *A Coat of Many Colors*. The University of California Press, Berkeley, 1987.

The museum is located on the ground floor of the Institute of Psychoanalysis in Bolshoi Prospect, Petrograd district. It has two rooms, no windows and it is open two days a week. There is a sharp dichotomy between the two rooms, which is reminiscent of the semiotic duality of the mythology of St Petersburg explored by Lotman and Uspensky: one of the artificial spaces, the “information room” offers a clear, lucid experience with rational pieces of information while the larger second space “the hall of Freud’s virtual dreams” presents an interpretation of the dreams of the founder of psychoanalysis through various objects and pictures. This room is in semi-darkness, only a bright square opposite the door, a mock window, gives out any light. As dictated by the dual visual rhetoric: conscious / unconscious; awake / dream; transparent / obscure; knowledge / intuition, association; chronology / dream-memory traces. The spatial design of the tiny museum is captivating. As the visitor enters, his gaze immediately meets the abstract experience of the square of light ending the second room and this is matched by the orderly arrangement of the clearly lit information boards on the walls of the first room covered in green wallpaper. The room of virtual dreams shows dream interpretations represented through objects, pictures and texts behind glass walls both on the right and on the left. Each of the exhibits is associated with an important object of the Freud literature or mythologeme. The representation of virtual dreams—which are dreams invented by the museum—is built around eight sculptures of the Freud collection in London.

The eight statues: *Seated Isis with the infant Horus*,²⁰ *Sphinx*,²¹ *Athena with the Gorgon’s head on her breastplate*,²² *Imhotep*,²³ *Chinese elder*,²⁴ *Horse and horseman*,²⁵ *Amun-Ra*,²⁶ *Thoth depicted as a baboon*.²⁷

²⁰ Egyptian, bronze, 26th dynasty, cc. 600 BC. 21.5 cm. Freud Museum, London, 3037. “*Meine alten und dreckigen Götter.*” Aus Sigmund Freuds Sammlung. Ed. by Lydia MARINELLI. Sigmund Freud-Museum, Stroemfeld, Frankfurt am Main, 1998. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same title.) p. 112.

²¹ Greek, terracotta, 5th–4th c. BC, 18.5 cm. Freud Museum, London, 4387. “*Meine...*” p. 131.

²² Roman, bronze, cc. 100 AD Roman replica of Greek original. 10.4 cm. Freud Museum, London, 2007. “*Meine...*” p. 144.

²³ Egyptian, bronze, 26th dynasty, cc. 600 BC, 12 cm. Freud Museum, London, 3027. “*Meine...*” p. 110.

²⁴ 19th c., textile, wood, 32.5x19x12.5 cm. I would like to thank Michael Molnar for making the details of the statue available.

²⁵ Greek, terracotta, 550 BC, 10.3 cm, Freud Museum, London, 3723. *Sigmund Freud and Art. His Personal Collection of Antiquities*. Foreword: Peter GAY. Ed. by Lynn GAMWELL—

This list also demonstrates the duality mentioned above: this is the cultural context of the museum. Isis, the metaphor of the “archetypal mother” is followed by the Sphinx, the central figure of the Oedipus story, which played such an important role in Freud’s life; Medusa, the Gorgon’s head appearing on Athena’s breastplate is of course also found among the attributes of Persephone. Imhotep was a physician, architect, poet and carpenter. Amun-Ra is a god, whose fate has also been shaped by human history; and Thoth—among other functions—is the god of writing, the revolutionization of memory. The choir of gods assembled by Mazin offers several mythological insights and psychoanalytic interpretations—it is worth noting that Thoth represented as a baboon is the emblem of the museum. Nikolai Apolonovich, the hero of the Bely novel depicting St Petersburg in the midst of its metaphysical collapse, studies the Egyptian Book of the Dead and Manethon’s writings in a village near Tunis towards the end of the story. When Mazin chooses the statue of Thoth as a baboon as the emblem of the museum, he alludes to Bely as well as to Freud. The duality of Pallas Athena / Persephone also deserves mention, for the sake of the Mandelstam poem (*In Petropolis, translucent, we shall die*) if nothing else. Károly Kerényi writes about the Gorgon’s head in *Greek Mythology*: “To the question of how the Gorgon’s head could appear independently, the answer is: in one version, in the Underworld, as Persephone’s tool of self-defence; while according to another version, supported by several illustrations, on the chest of Pallas Athena.”²⁸

The museum is meticulously designed concept art both as a whole and in its details, which suggests a profound familiarity with psychoanalysis as well as an intimate acquaintance with the conceptual trends of Russian neo-avant-garde: a Viktor Mazin who feels equally at home in these two cultural media and whose work must be seen in the institutional system of contemporary Leningrad and the counter-culture of St Petersburg and on the horizon of the international psychoanalytic movement at the same time. The museum exemplifies a *dense network of allusions*: a malleable, continually transfor-

Richard WELLS. State University of New York, Freud Museum London, 1989. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same title.) p. 81.

²⁶ Egyptian, bronze, cc. 716–352 BC. 21.2 cm, Freud Museum, London, 3138. *Sigmund Freud...*

²⁷ Egyptian, marble, 30 BC–395 AD. 31.5 cm, Freud Museum, London, 3133. “*Meine...*” p. 111.

²⁸ Károly KERÉNYI, *Görög mitológia* [Greek mythology]. Gondolat, Budapest, 1977. p. 40.

ming cultural space where the system of symbolic interconnections offers rereadable paths and interpretations. The density of allusions answers the question: why are we talking of a museum when authentic objects are entirely absent? Mazin's work is also an illustration of how to create a museum-like existence by summoning the *genius loci*—simply through uncovering relationships.

Mazin, however, has done nothing but carry on one of the important spiritual traditions of St Petersburg: he has founded a museum which focuses on the scrutiny of the dialogue with the “West” and on the self-scrutiny of contemporary Russian counter-culture. An outsider will find it difficult to understand how deeply characteristic it is of the city and at the same time what an avant-garde and provocative gesture it is to found a museum around here—until his first visit. The analysis of the museum should devote some thought to Mazin's place in the world of contemporary Russian arts and to the trends in which he played a significant role.

The lesson of “knowledge imported from the West” is similarly worth mentioning. Necrorealism emerged in the 1980s, at first sight it appeared to be a radical wing of the Neue Wilde and the New Artists movements. The biggest exhibition of Leningrad's dissident artists was organised in 1981 in Kononenko's apartment in Bronnitskaya Street. The participants of this illegal exhibition were among those who founded the Society of Experimental Visual Arts, which later joined the Society of Experimental Exhibitions established in the seventies. Several artists from a variety of avant-garde traditions participated in these movements and exhibitions, such as the scenic designer of the Kirov Ballet, the *new wave* artist Sergei Sergeyev and Timur Novikov who was characterized by Viktor Mazin as a painter of “textural minimalism” in his paper written jointly with Margarita Tupitsin in 1989 for *Flash Art*. These art groups were created by Novikov and other people in 1982. They kept contact with contemporary pop culture, or “lifestyle revolutions,” and fervently responded to the manifestations of consumer society. They had ties with the punk movement as well: the necrorealism movement was founded by Jevgeny Yufit, the punk filmmaker and photographer. All of Mazin's observations about the movement and the aesthetics of necrorealism also apply to the problem of the museum he established. “Necrorealism approaches to the representation of the unrepresentable, presentation, death: about cinema, about dreams, about death. Death in all its paradoxical uniqueness and repetitiveness. It is always quite a

different image.”²⁹ The core motivation of the Freud museum is precisely the representation of the unrepresentable, the resurgence of the suppressed and its exposition in a museum context. It is not yet *another museum* in St Petersburg; this would make no sense. The essence of the museums in Vienna and London and of the memorial room recently created in Freud’s birth town is—similarly to the museum apartments of Akhmatova, Nabokov or Pushkin in St Petersburg—is capturing and interpreting the *genius loci* evoked by the original site. In St Petersburg *Freudism* itself is the object of the museum. The question is: how did this happen and why?

Just as 18th-century western experimental natural science, anatomy, is the central theme of the *Kunstkamera*, so is western Freudism the central theme here, at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. The local interpretation in the *Kunstkamera* reflects the changes in the meaning of natural science, which is theoretically independent of its cultural context; and the same holds for the museum created by Viktor Mazin with its succession of exhibitions, conferences and concerts. The problem of the museum in St Petersburg is connected to the history of the reception of Freudism in Russia and the Soviet Union. This is only a starting point, however, a potential association, since the analysis of the influences of Freudism over the course of history is not the object but the context of the museum. In my opinion, this is the heart of the matter.

Mazin undertook to reconstruct and represent something that cannot be represented in a museological sense either in St Petersburg or anywhere else. This is because the activities of the psychoanalyst have no palpable *traces*. The words uttered and heard, the dialogues without replies, where the silent attention of one is the answer and the question, where one half of the dialogue does not even have words—the most that can be recorded of this scene is its physical memory traces, its circumstances. The exhibitions organised for the Freud anniversary all demonstrate this traceless ghostliness—with varied results. The display in the Jüdisches Museum of Berlin posits Mazin’s question, I believe, and gives a less careful, inadequate answer.³⁰ Both exhibitions employ the tool of

²⁹ Viktor MAZIN, Excerpts... Trans. by Maria JETT. In *Necrorealism. Contexts, History, Interpretations*. Ed. by Seth Graham. p. 28.

³⁰ *PSYCHOanalyse. Sigmund Freud zum 150.Geburtstag*. Jüdisches Museum Berlin. Ed. by Cilly KUGELMANN, Nicola LEPP and Daniel TYRADELLIS. Nicolai, Berlin, 2006. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same title.)

illustrating free associations; but Mazin and his colleagues do not overlook spirit of the place, they evoke it through free poetry. It is no coincidence that the couch comes up again and again even in Vienna, since this is the only fetish which is recognised by all.³¹

The pursuit and reconstruction of the knowledge buried in impenetrable semi-consciousness, of the connections between memory traces, remind us of the German artist Gerhard Richter's *Atlas* and the "primal picture": Warburg's Mnemosyne Atlas. In one of their joint studies, Mazin and Turkina analysed Susan Hiller's work, *After the Freud Museum*, on the occasion of the artist's visit to St Petersburg. Hiller's collection—in contrast with Freud's culture historical, archaeological collection—consists of objects of no intrinsic value which gain their meanings through their contexts. Hiller's methods concerning memory share a great deal with the procedures used by Mazin. "Many of Susan Hiller's works remind us of a kind of oneiroagent, connecting two worlds, the world of waking and the world of dreams. Deconstruction of binary oppositions, like science/art, art/magic, individual/collective, male/female, rational/irrational, language/thing, theory/practice, ethnologist/native, seem to us an integral component of practically all of the artist's works. It can be said that art permits her to go outside the framework of anthropological analysis in the spirit of Claude Levi-Strauss. Dream/reality is one of these oppositions fundamental for human culture, which is of special interest to us in Freud's Dreams Museum."³²

Susan Hiller constructs a universe where the connections, recognitions, rejections and identifications among the texts and images cannot be rationally followed. Concept art meets the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams: meaning is not determined, not defined any more. As Gombrich has pointed out: anything may mean anything; there are only contextual, momentary meanings, invariable canons are accordingly absent. It is the great paradox of aesthetics—the problem of changing effects—that Mazin captures in his museum.

³¹ *Die Couch. Vom Denken im Liegen.* (Eine Ausstellung der Sigmund Freud Privatstiftung, Sigmund Freud-Museum, Wien.) Ed. by Lydia MARINELLI. Prestel, Munich, 2006. (The catalogue to the exhibition of the same title.)

³² Viktor MAZIN and Olesya TURKINA, Susan Hiller in Freud's Dream Museum. In *Kabinet. Arts and Dreams.* The British Council, Freud's Dream Museum, St Petersburg, 2002, pp. 223–225.

What does it mean that something affected something? How did the process of affecting work? Should we content ourselves with procedural metaphors and chronological matches? Is sequential order decisive? What paths do interconnections in cultural history follow? Which of these do we know?

These are the great questions of Freud and Warburg as well—as they are the questions of memory research, which could do no more than explore formal rules without referring to cultural history. Is an iconography built exclusively around attested instances of transference not merely a thematic catalogue? Our knowledge of the development of cultural influences, of this key issue so very important for all of us, is the most limited of all: that is what the haphazard, impromptu associations in this dreamlike space expose. From this perspective, the museum is an imprint of the contemporary cultural world in which the *genius loci* adopts the rules of late modernity: the place does not necessarily mean physical space, spirit of the place may disengage from the space where it was begotten. Cultural spaces are no longer physical spaces, spirit of the place goes its independent way among texts, images, media.

And yet, there is no other place where what we see at the back of Bolshoi Prospect means the same as it does here. St Petersburg has Petropol behind it, Thoth has Bely's novel, Mandelstam's spirit in the twilight of the glass walls. And, I believe, this museum is the museum of Proust as well: of the hopeless strife to regain control over involuntary memory.

The two rooms in St Petersburg form an unusual and important museum of cultural history. In order to interpret it, we have had to remember the volatile context in which it lives. At the time of my visit, the Hermitage was under reconstruction and the reconstruction plans of the Russian Museum were also made public. A variety of pasts gathered together, the memorials of Dzerzhinsky, Lenin and Marx, the statue of Olga Fyodorovna Berggolts (she was a commentator at Leningrad radio during the blockade, her voice was remembered for ever by hundreds of thousands of listeners), the tiny statues erected in memory of Akhmatova and Brodsky in the inner courtyard of the Twelve Collegia, the memorials of Kirov and Krupskaya. This densely woven fabric is particularly instructive for us who conceive of a national past as flowing along a single linear narrative and shape our public spaces accordingly...

For me, Mazin's museum is one of Zhivayev's spaces. Both are phantasmagorias, attempts at the interpretation of invisible St Petersburg and the unmistakable virtual cultural spaces of the real city. This museum is a museum of the cultural history of the city as much as it is a museum of Freudism. The city is itself a palimpsest.

Architecture, the creation of the space for existence and non-existence, was a poetic task for Mandelstam. St Petersburg, glistening, translucent, shimmering Petropolis teems with the ghosts of the Elysian fields. And where Persephone sat on the throne, the underworld, Hades reigns.

Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich

In January 2007 it was 10 degrees Celsius above zero in Munich. People sitting on the street terraces of cafes turned their sunglass-protected faces towards the blazing sun, like on a perfect skiing holiday. The weather was *too nice*, undeserved, unacceptable, unrejectable. And as the city was bathing in the winter sun, it suddenly became manifest what the long shadow of the past must mean around here.

It is the architecture of the enormous grey concrete building with its numerous glass walls designed by Stephan Braunfels¹ that first captivates someone visiting the Pinakothek der Moderne, the Munich museum of contemporary art, which opened to the public in 2002. If you do not even glance at the permanent collections² or the temporary displays—and this is quite possible in the Pinakothek—, just pass between the *two* main entrances, stop in the thirty meter high floodlit rotunda and enjoy the precious sight offered by the built-in space as you watch the periodic rhythm of the white walls, spacious stairways, galleries and glass windows, you have not come in vain. The spectacle of the perspective play of the ascending-descending, expanding stairways to the right and to the left of the rotunda undoubtedly secures Braunfels a place among the outstanding creators of contemporary museum architecture. The contemporary allure of the spatial spectacle has given rise to a series of iconic, sculpture-like buildings, which receive acclaim for their design rather than for the

¹ Stephan BRAUNFELS, *Kunst, Architektur Design. Pinakothek der Moderne*. Birkhauser, Verlag für Architektur, Basel–Berlin–Rostock, 2002.

² *Pinakothek der Moderne: A Handbook*. Published by Reinhold BAUMSTARK, Carla SCHULZ-HOFFMANN, Michael SEMFF, Winfried NERDINGER and Florian HUFNAGL. Pinakothek-Dumont, Munich, 2002.

excellence of their collections. In the case of the Pinakothek der Moderne, however, the architecture does not overbear the collections and the building is more than a bow to the fashion of spectacularity. It abounds with allusions which earn our admiration from a complex cultural and urbanistic point of view reaching deeper than mere fashion. Braunfels's building is comparable to Daniel Libeskind's Jüdisches Museum in this respect. But while the deconstructive building in Berlin demands our attention with an unmistakable spatial aggression, the late modern style of the Pinakothek invites a dialogue in a far more reserved, unassuming manner.

Leaving the central rotunda of the diagonally split building, the visitor is met with different spaces, each adjusted in mood to the particular collection displayed in it. The Pinakothek der Moderne houses four discretely connected collections. With the concatenation of the architectural museum of the Munich University of Technology, the State of Bavaria modern, 20th–21st century collection, the graphic art collection and the so-called Neue Sammlung (New Collection), Germany has joined MoMA—as pointed out by Sándor Radnóti in 2002³—in displaying the works of applied art side by side with those of the Grand Art. A major strength of Braunfels's spatial design is that the different collections are saluted with different lights, grids and rhythms opening from the rotunda. The modern collections and the temporary exhibitions receive natural light from the top, the graphic art collection is lit by artificial light sources and the street-level architectural museum is illuminated from the sides.

The two main entrances to the museum deserve special mention. Visitors arriving from the north, the direction of the city centre, reach the rotunda via the conservatory surrounded by tall glass walls, and if they directly cross the rotunda to the south exit, they are met with the sight of the 19th century building of the Alte Pinakothek designed by Leo von Klenze. That is to say, Braunfels's two entrances and the rotunda literally split the outwardly undivided modern block into two along its diagonal axis, thus providing a path leading through the modern collection for visitors coming from the city centre and walking towards the Alte or Neue Pinakothek; the architect also declares by this arrangement that those who are not satisfied

³ Sándor RADNÓTI, *Pi mint Pinakotéka. (Új múzeum Münchenben.)* [Pi for Pinakothek. A new museum in Munich]. *Magyar Narancs*, October 31, 2002, pp. 28–29.



The central rotunda

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Pinakothek der Moderne München, 2008

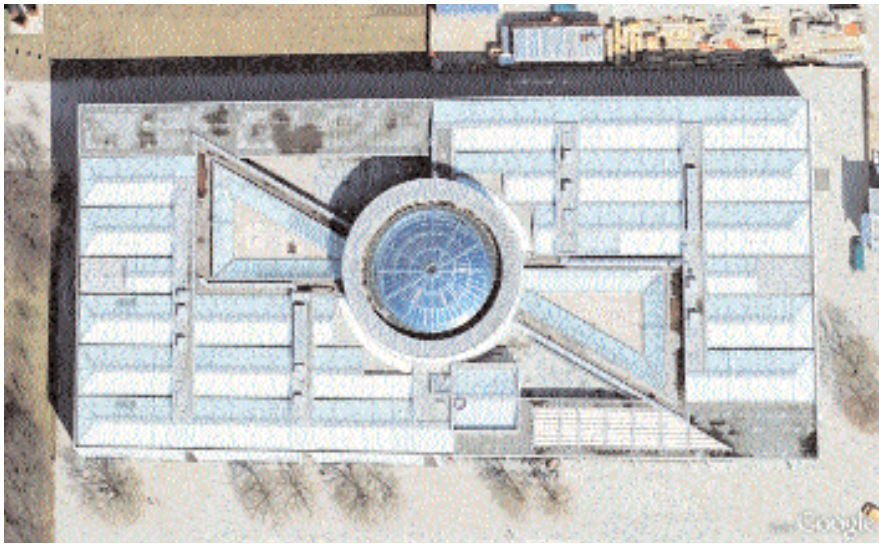
with naive appreciation, must view the building together with its surroundings to gain deeper understanding. If it was not for this architectural solution, a substantial proportion of visitors to the contemporary collections would not necessarily be interested in that hidden story, which can be uncovered through the architectural traces of cultural space finally revealed by the Pinakothek der Moderne.

Before discussing my thoughts on exhibition spaces and collections, allow me to act as an uninvited Cicerone and offer a short package tour to the past of Munich: I shall recall the ghosts of some of the streets and buildings surrounding the Pinakothek der Moderne—those also recommended by Braunfels's building.

Early in the 19th century, Ludwig I of Bavaria challenged Prussian Berlin and undertook the cultural transformation of Munich, which he started by establishing an independent antique collection as dictated by the norms of Philhellenism. The building competing with Schinkel's Altes Museum in Berlin was completed in 1830, after the designs of Leo von Klenze. The construction of the wider architectural surroundings of the Glyptothek started at the same time. The antique collection was housed in a classicistic building opposite Klenze's Neoclassical museum in Königsplatz and the Propyläen memorial gate unifying and opening the square was completed by the middle of the century also after Klenze's designs. The architect's other magnificent work, the Alte Pinakothek, was constructed in parallel with the Königsplatz project in its immediate surroundings. The Alte Pinakothek, or old gallery, houses art collections dating up to the 17th century, while 18th-century and contemporary 19th-century works were displayed in the Neue Pinakothek in a building designed by August von Voit.

This is, then, the wider cultural and urbanistic context in which Braunfels's building is interpreted, since this 21st century *modern* museum is simply the consequence of yet another period in the history of art. The "new" adjective is now an attribute of the past; the pictures exhibited in the museum, which is now under the management of Hugo von Tschudi from Berlin, represent a chapter in the history of art.

It was not only this network of allusions that meant a challenge for the designers of the Pinakothek der Moderne. They also had to respond to the questions posed by the existence and the unwanted heritage of the Third Reich; and—in close connection with this—they had to interpret the architectural memory traces of the muse-



The diagonally split building of Pinakothek der Moderne
Munich, designed by Stephan Braunfels, aerial view

© Google Earth 2008



Exterior perspective

© Pinakothek der Moderne

Photo: Jens Weber

ums seriously damaged and demolished in the city bombed to ruins in the Second World War. Until the accumulated layers of the past, “the red stains of pain smeared over the walls”⁴ are understood, until the past so frequently covered up is evoked, the magnificence of the Pinakothek der Moderne can only be partially absorbed. This is because the museum has been erected, and has become a dominant site of the cultural structure of the city, at a time when the memory of Munich—the city of the Movement, as it was called during the Third Reich—is undergoing a major transformation, at times precisely in connection with the museum, as was shown by the exhibition *Ort und Erinnerung* (Place and Memory) of 2006.⁵

The Nazi appropriation of the urban space and the architectural traditions had a far greater impact on the museum quarters in Munich than it did in Berlin. While the Museumsinsel in Berlin was of secondary importance from the point of view of National Socialist architecture and the symbolic possession of space, the possession of Königsplatz, Meiser and Arcis Strasse, the immediate surroundings of the museums in Munich had primary significance for Hitler and local National Socialists.⁶ The National Socialist “re-rendering” of the Königsplatz area was a manifestation of Munich’s continuing political significance in opposition to Berlin, the capital city of the Third Reich. Berlin—in contrast with the Bavarian capital—was a cosmopolitan metropolis of the nineteen twenties, and the intention was to eliminate almost all traces of this past with the help of Speer’s designs. But National Socialism had its home in the city situated along the River Isar, Munich, and the methods of National Socialist “re-rendering” were suitably chosen: in addition to Hermann Giesler’s megalomaniacal designs rewriting the entire structure of the city, the Nazi leadership found it necessary to tamper with the “fine structure” of Munich as well.

⁴ Passage quoted from a well-known poem of Miklós Radnóti, *Nem tudhatom...* [I know not what...], 1944.

⁵ Winfried NERDINGER, *Ort und Erinnerung. Nationalsozialismus in München*, Architekturmuseum TU, Munich, Verlag Anton Pustet, Salzburg–Munich, 2006.

⁶ Michael KAMP, *Das Museum als Ort der Politik. Münchner Museen im 19. Jahrhundert*. Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades der Philosophie an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, 2002. <http://edoc.ub.uni-muenchen.de/archive/00004080/01/Kamp-Michael.pdf>, Gavriel D. ROSENFELD, *Munich and Memory. Architecture, Monuments, and the Legacy of the Third Reich*. University of California Press, Berkley–Los Angeles–London, 2000.

The possession and re-rendering of Königsplatz accordingly became important issues. The two open neoclassical peristyles of the Ehrentempel designed by Troost, where the Nazis killed in the “Beer Hall Coup” of 1923 were reburied, were erected opposite the Propyläen, on the corner of Meiser and Arcis Strasse. In accordance with the principle of symmetry, the two peristyles were bordered by the Führerbau on one side and the headquarters of the Nazi party, the Verwaltungsbau der NSDAP, on the other. These two buildings are naturally similar in style to the neoclassical block of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) also designed by Troost and constructed between 1933 and 1937.

By the end of the Second World War, the entire city, and Königsplatz and the museum buildings within it, had suffered severe, in places irredeemable, damage. Most of the Glyptothek collapsed and its restoration to its original condition was not even considered during its reconstruction, which took several years nevertheless. The colour wall paintings, the decorative marble floor, the stuccoes and Peter von Cornelius’s frescoes only survive in photographs. The reconstruction project designed and led by Josef Wiedemann between 1957 and 1961 resulted in dramatically ahistoric, puritan, bare brick walls with sculptures placed among them.⁷ Searching for the reasons behind this presentation of antiquities, the visitor can discover an allusion to the Nazi exploitation of Philhellenism, that is, to the period between 1933 and 1945 in the life of Königsplatz. Wiedemann did not restore the ruined 19th century building but “erected” a museum of the era *after* National Socialism instead. The decision to rebuild the Glyptothek without restoring it is a good illustration of the architectural debates of the post-1945 era, which also influenced and—among other factors—determined the fate of the Alte and Neue Pinakothek. The standpoints of modernists, those in favour of demolition, and traditionalists, those in favour of complete restoration, equally embraced the inseparable duality of the buildings erected by the Third Reich and ruined by the Allies. Some of the buildings erected by National Socialists—such as the two Ehrentempels—were obliterated by the

⁷ Heiner KNELL, Hanno-Walter KRUFT, Re-Opening of the Munich Glyptothek. *Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 114, No. 831. 1972, Jun., pp. 426–436; Josef WIEDEMANN, Der Innenausbau der Glyptothek nach der Zerstörung. In: *Glyptothek München 1830–1980*. Jubiläumsausstellung zur Entstehung- und Baugeschichte 17. September bis 23. November 1980, Glyptothek München, Königsplatz, pp. 386–398.

occupying forces soon after the war on Eisenhower's orders. The concrete foundations of the twin buildings can still be seen on either side of the undamaged Führer- and Verwaltungsbau: a small, untended area of dirt, moss, scruffy trees, an incomprehensible wound in the present tissue of the city. The fate of the two, miraculously unharmed buildings is symbolic. The Führerbau was first turned into the "Amerika Haus," a cultural and political establishment for the occupying forces arriving with the promise of democracy, and later into a college of musical arts. Its entrance hall also displays the starting point of Günter Demnig's *Stolpersteine* (Stumbling Blocks) commemorative action: since the first pieces of the memorial series of brass blocks with names carved in them as reminders of the loss felt over destroyed German Jews have been installed, the Führerbau is perhaps a less depressing sight. The Verwaltungsbau houses plaster casts today, and the graphic art and Egyptian collections are also displayed here.

The modernist view also won the debate over the Neue Pinakothek building designed by Voit, which had been so badly damaged that it had to be taken down completely. Its collection was exhibited in the building of the Haus der Deutsches Kunst designed by Troost for several years, until the present day museum designed by Alexander von Branca was completed. Branca's building was meant to satisfy the requirements of modernity and—interestingly—of some kind of romantic mood at the same time: the demure cement historicism of the building reminiscent of a castle overlooking the Alte Pinakothek⁸ is especially discomfiting now that the Pinakothek der Moderne has been completed. As for the Alte Pinakothek itself, which had also been severely damaged, it was finally rebuilt after the war according to Hans Döllgast's creative reconstruction designs.⁹ It is difficult to decide in retrospect to what extent Döllgast was influenced by a shortage of money, forcing a solution that was feasible under the post-war circumstances, and in what part were the designs genuinely intended to reinterpret the building. Döllgast transferred

⁸ Alex GORDON, The Neue Pinakothek in Munich: 'Making the Picture Live' *The International Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*. 1982, 1 pp. 281–302.

⁹ Leo SCHMIDT, *Between Restoration and Reconstruction*. In Proceedings of the First International Symposium on Future of Restoration, University of Technology, The Netherlands, 2001. Ed. by Leo W. Verhoef. Publications Office Faculty of Architecture, University of Technology, Delft, 2001. pp. 130–146. http://www.bk.tudelft.nl/users/verhoef/internet/Quo_vadis_final.pdf

the main entrance and created a new, previously absent centre for the building by constructing exceedingly puritan double stairways replacing the previous row of balconies on the south facade. (Braunfels's building alludes to *this* stairway as well.) Döllgast incidentally rebuilt the effectively flattened central part of the building using bricks freed from nearby ruins, and the visitor can clearly perceive the boundaries of the destruction and of the renovation. The similarly puritan and ahistoric renovation of the Glyptothek and the Alte Pinakothek attains special significance in both museums. The trunk statues of Aeginites displayed in the Glyptothek—wiped clean of their 19th century reconstruction by Thorvaldsen¹⁰—are shown to the visitor in the continually transforming context of the social present; their dramatic effect is not in the least subdued by the dreamy museum atmosphere. Similarly, the present design of the Alte Pinakothek creates a powerful frame for the 17th to 18th century collection, where the tools of architecture are made good use of to reveal the trauma.

The visitor encounters countless ghostly memory traces around the museum quarter and Königsplatz in Munich. In 2004, for instance, the underground level room—which can also be seen from the escalators of the underground station—of the Städtische Galerie (City Gallery) of Lenbachhaus situated on the Propyläen side of Königsplatz displayed Maria Eichorn's exhibition entitled Restitutionspolitik. The exhibition related the story of some of the pictures that had been seized for the Führer Museum, shedding some light on the still highly sensitive issue of German and Austrian post-war museum policy. Brienner Strasse, one of the streets leading to Königsplatz, also carries an accumulation of pasts. Until 1945 it was the location of the Brown House, which had been transformed from a 19th century palace after Troost's designs and which was finally destroyed in 1947; a neighbouring slot is still occupied by Karl von Fischer's building, where once the NSDAP courts operated and which is now the central office of the National Lottery. As we approach the Maximilian University, we may literally stumble upon the memorial to the members of the Munich resistance movement, the White Rose—Sophie Scholl and her fellow students—, outside the main building: ceramic replicas of letters, old photographs and leaflets littered among the

¹⁰ William J. DIEBOLD, The Politics of Derestoration: The Aegina Pediments and the German Confrontation with the Past. *Art Journal*. Vol. 54. No. 2. Summer 1995, pp. 60–66.

paving stones. The immediate surroundings of Braunfels's building form a densely woven urban tissue, which is still darkened—to use the title phrase of Aleida Assmann's book—by the long shadow of the past (*Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit*).¹¹

When with the two entrances, Braunfels almost beckons the visitor to walk through the museum, he—in my interpretation—draws their attention to the urban context, to a possible strategy for comprehending the past. This method is as effective as it is succinct and as unmistakable as it is gentle. Even those who simply embrace the opportunities offered by the architect and those who walk across the traditionally modern white cube halls of the museum will be prompted to search for explanations by the sight of the building diagonally split into two. A suspicion is awakened, a dialogue is offered and reasons are sought all at the same time.

The work of Braunfels is a perfect illustration of how we perceive and understand a building if we follow a narrowly defined art historical interpretation and the meaning creating guidance of the local context. The uniqueness and plastic power of this building, the captivating play of the stairways, the tranquillity of the vast, top-lit halls conducive to silent mediation, the rotunda appearing again and again from different angles, the transparencies, the amalgamated aesthetic effect of the striking sights are an answer to the question of local history. It may be worth adding another example of a response to the challenges of the invisible neighbours. An important characteristic of the Pinakothek der Moderne—from the perspectives of universal history of art and museology—is that it houses the architectural collection as well as the design collection. The decision to include design in contemporary art is not without precedence, of course, since visitors to MoMA have been passing by a military helicopter for decades. But this city has a peculiar relationship with design: a few kilometres on from the Pinakothek der Moderne, on the museum island of Munich, there stands the Deutsches Museum, which the Nazis were so delighted to take over after 1934: they saw it as a proof of their technological advancement.

By framing a piece of Hans Ledwinka's Tatra 87 car from 1937 in a visual representation which would be fit for the masterpieces of

¹¹ Aleida ASSMANN, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik*. C.H. Beck, Munich, 2006.

modern sculpture, the Pinakothek der Moderne responds to this silent neighbour on the side.

The display of contemporary design offers a highly unusual museum experience. I spotted a laptop among the exhibits, which was just like the one I used three years ago. I find the hint that the time course of becoming a museum piece has accelerated a very brave idea.

At the time of my second visit to the Pinakothek der Moderne, an exhibition by Dan Flavin, one of the international gurus of classic *high culture*, minimalism, was on display. Flavin has been using fluorescent light tubes to build sculptures for decades; these are eminent examples of the type of contemporary art which can *only* exist through the museum. The metamorphosis of the assembly of everyday practical objects into a work of art is greatly dependent on the space that admits and presents it. Several of these neon-installations are displayed in the Dia Center in Beacon just north of New York, in similarly enormous, soundless spaces in a museum transformed from a former industrial building.

Even this meant something quite different in Munich. The temporary co-operation between Braunfels and Flavin makes it manifest that in contrast with iconic sculpture-buildings, museums adopting the white cube style of modernity are capable of many different dialogues—within the era of universal modernity, of course. In any case, an architect and an installation artist spoke the same language this time, which is a rare occurrence. There are spaces where once in a while modern art succeeds in making the silences of the laboratory and the church inseparable from each other.

It is a real treat to be in the Pinakothek der Moderne, the museum which stands in the city of the visible and invisible remains of heaped, suppressed, uncovered pasts—and this treat is sought by many people around there every day.

Museum of Ara Pacis, Rome

Adolf Hitler arrived in the eternal city on 3rd May, 1939; on his way to Quirinal Palace he could catch a glimpse of some of the prominent pieces of the Roman legacy. He passed by—among others—the Pyramid of Cestius, the thermae of Caracalla, the Palatine, the Colosseum and the Forum Romanum before he finally arrived at the location of his official visit beside the Palazzo Venezia.¹ The leader of the Third Reich came to discuss several political issues with Mussolini, but the question of antique Rome also featured in their negotiations for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Hitler himself revealed a strong interest in the origins of National Socialist neo-classicism: since he had to do without seeing the Parthenon² in real life, the prominent examples of megalomaniac Roman architecture were all the more important for him; on the other hand, Mussolini was trying to make the most of the Führer's fascination with antiquity (which did not extend to contemporary art). It was 1939, Musso-

¹ Alex SCOBIE, *Hitler's State Architecture. The Impact of Classical Antiquity*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, 1990, pp. 9–36.

² The approach of the National Socialist elite to the issue of antique models was far from unequivocal. Both Rome and Greece were situated in the despised South in the eyes of Rosenberg and Himmler—a world which had nothing to do with Northern Aryan mythology. For Speer, Troost, Ruff and Arno Breker, the Nazi elite of architecture and sculpture, antiquity constituted the model to be followed. It is a different question that the Greeks were held in much higher esteem than the Romans. The head of the German Institute of Archeology of Rome, Gerhardt Rodenwaldt, who was also required to take part in the celebration of Augustus, noted in his 1937 study *Kunst um Augustus* that “us” Germans adopt Homer rather than Vergil as our poet and that the Acropolis is of higher significance than the Forum Romanum, the statues of Olympia, the Roman historical portraits. Cf. Suzanne L. MARCHAND, *Down from Olympus. Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 348.

lini had the vision of himself following in the footsteps of Augustus. On 6th May, Hitler and Mussolini visited the exhibition of *Mostra Augustea della Romanità* in the Palazzo delle Esposizioni; Hitler returned the next morning to “inhale” the breath of history. The privilege of basking in the light of past greatness was not only Mussolini’s, Hitler also did his best to take his share of the homage paid to the architectural masterpiece. That may be why he lingered among the ruins of the Colosseum for a while, where he could mull over the monumental vision of the Kongresshalle under construction in Nuremberg after the designs of Ludwig and Franz Ruff.

The next day brought another opportunity for antique cultural activities, as the bad weather blew the air parade away; the Führer visited the *Ara Pacis*, which was temporarily displayed in the thermae of Diocletian. A photograph taken at the time shows him standing next to Mussolini listening to a commentary on a frieze depicting a celebration procession with the participation of the social elite of Augustus’ age. Everyone is dressed in a uniform in the picture, including the notable archaeologist Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli, who was in a position to present the altar to the Führer and his company thanks to the Duce’s efforts. His meeting with the Führer incidentally made such a powerful impression on Bandinelli that he turned into a radical communist by the end of the War and later remembered Hitler’s visit in a separate memoir.⁵

The *Ara Pacis* was indeed excavated by Mussolini. The Senate had brought the decision to erect an *Altar to Peace* after the victorious return of the emperor from Hispania and Gaul and the work was completed in 9 BC. The central altar is surrounded by enormous, open, sculptured walls. Augustus had the altar erected on the Campus Martius next to the Mausoleum and Horologium—by the Via Flaminia, the present day Via del Corso—, all of which were to honour the memory of the emperor. The existence of the Mausoleum constructed earlier, in 28 BC, on the northern part of the Campus Martius by the River Tiber was—as was noted by Strabo—connected to the fact that the area had been used as a public burial ground. The circular building of the Mausoleum measured 88 metres in diameter and 44 metres in height and was modelled on the tomb of Alexander the Great in

⁵ Ranuccio Bianchi BANDINELLI, *Hitler e Mussolini. 1938: il viaggio del Führer in Italia*. E/o, Roma, 1995.

Alexandria. It was the burial site of several Roman dignitaries and emperors, including Augustus himself. The commemorative assembly of buildings once comprised the 22 metre tall obelisk of Psammetichus II, the sundial of the *Horologium Augusti*, which had been transferred from Heliopolis to Rome and was later moved to Piazza Montecitorio in 1792, where it still stands today.

As the centuries passed by and the Roman street level rose higher and higher, so the *Ara Pacis* slipped from the memory of the city and of history. It re-emerged from oblivion in 1566, when Cardinal Giovanni Ricci de Montepulciano purchased some of the floral friezes, which later found a home either in the Villa Medici or the Louvre. The *Ara Pacis* was then forgotten once again and was only rediscovered in 1859 under the Palazzo Peretti (Fiano). Some fragments were lifted but the possibility of saving the entire altar was only brought up at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries, in close connection with the rise of national sentiments and the nationalistic fascination with antiquity. Further fragments were lifted in 1905, but the whole altar was only excavated in Mussolini's time, when it was temporarily exhibited in Diocletian's *thermae*, where it was viewed by Hitler as well.

Mussolini showed a very keen interest in spectacularity—and in avant-garde solutions to the exploitation and usurpation of the past—, as he had greater and in some respects graver plans with it than its mere exhibition as a historical relic. Both the Mausoleum and the *Ara Pacis* were destined to play a grand role in creating the Augustus mythos and they were made to perform their act on the “stage” constructed by Mussolini around the relics he had brought together. Mussolini—who, axe in hand, participated in the work himself in one of his usual performances—first of all had the Mausoleum freed, so to speak, from the Auditorium by dismantling the concert hall, which had opened in 1908. He thus created an open association in historical time between the age of Augustus and his own. Mussolini's efforts to take possession of the past also involved moving the *Ara Pacis* to a new location: it was assembled beside the Mausoleum, on the bank of the River Tiber. Fascist propaganda assigned a prominent role to the Mausoleum and the *Ara Pacis* and so they were placed beside one another, lifted from the customary Roman urbanistic context—that is, from the uncovered build-up of inseparable layers of antique, medieval, renaissance and modern remains—and the

modern complex of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore was built around them. The space shaped by Mussolini was radically different from the original context of the Mausoleum; the spaciousness of the square and the monumentality of the modern buildings were formed on a scale very much unlike that of the surroundings. It is worth noting that the Piazzale is an exceptionally aggressive example of the translation of political will into the language of urban design. Unlike Hitler, who would have overwritten entire German urban structures in his megalomania if he had had the time, Mussolini constructed the buildings of Fascist urban design, such as the EUR and the Foro Italico, *outside* the city. Piazzale Augusto Imperatore constituted an instance of major aggression for those living in the midst of Rome's memory traces, in the integrity of the fabric of accumulated pasts.

The tasks of designing the building which was to be used as the public exhibition venue for the *Ara Pacis* assembled here and of restructuring the Piazzale were put in the hands of Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, whose glass pavilion, inaugurated in 1938, rhymed, so to speak, with the altar itself. The new space announced the unbreakable montage of the age of Mussolini and that of Augustus, behind the high-tech glass walls between the classic colonnades there stood the altar of peace in full view. For the eyewitnesses of the modern age, it was Mussolini who unearthed the memory of Augustus and embedded it in the architectural frame of Fascism. On the Piazzale side of Morpurgo's building, at the street level of Via Ripetta, the Emperor's bronze lettered text, the *Res gestae divi Augusti* is displayed. The resume of the life and deeds of the *pater patriae* written in 14 is a stylistic and political masterpiece; as observed by Géza Alföldi: it is the broadcast of "a power of hitherto unknown greatness"⁴ in a public square—which was originally displayed on two metallic plates by the Mausoleum gate. The *Res gestae* was thus also part of the power representation of the Campus Martius: the mausoleum, the sundial, the altar, the inscription placed in an urban space constituted a kind of semantic control over that urban space, which was—in his own way—also followed by Mussolini. The fact that Augustus' text was mounted on the side of Morpurgo's work

⁴ Géza ALFÖLDI, Római császárok és feliratos emlékeik. Antik „média” a hatalom szolgálatában. [Roman emperors and their inscriptions. Antique “media” in the service of power.] In *Ókor*, Vol. 3. No. 2. 2004, pp. 27–34.

played a central role in the process of Mussolini taking possession of antiquity.⁵

The glass plates were removed as a precaution during the Second World War and Morpurgo's building could not be seen in its original state of 1938 until 1970. After a series of partly interrelated changes over the 1990s, the building housing the *Ara Pacis* was finally demolished. For one thing, it really was not suited to protecting the altar dating from the age of Augustus—air pollution had done a lot of harm to it. Secondly, the building's perception had changed, in line with the evolution of paradigms of remembrance policy: Francesco Rutilli, the former mayor of Rome, saw it as an unwanted symbol of Fascist imperial taste.

All this is not at all as self-evident in Rome as it is in Germany, where the radical critique of the architectural tradition of the Third Reich is now part of the practice of urbanism; besides Berlin, this is also illustrated by Munich and Nuremberg. The *Palazzo della Civiltà del Lavoro*, one of the buildings of Fascist Italy, which may be regarded as an icon of EUR—a rationalist neo-classicist block with a square shaped foundation erected between 1937 and 1942—now houses an audio-visual museum; its perception in collective memory and in architectural history has not been characterised by the critical aloofness typical of attitudes towards the architectural relics of the Third Reich. The *Ara Pacis*, the Mausoleum and the Piazzale are a demonstration of how the reconstruction process extorted by the desire to preserve historical monuments of art could turn into a political agenda. The partial elimination of the Fascist context did not suffice in itself to guarantee the success of the square and the new museum housing the *Ara Pacis*. The new building designed by Richard Meier is open to plenty of critical comment, most of which is closely related to the philosophy and practice of museum architecture which materialises in the celebrated American architect's work.

⁵ Cf. Ann Thomas WILKINS, Augustus, Mussolini, and the Parallel Imagery of Empire. In *Donatello among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Ed. by Claudia LAZZARO–Roger J. CRUM. Cornell University Press, Ithaca–London, 2005, pp. 53–67; Orietta ROSSINI: *Ara Pacis. Musei Comune Roma*. Electa, Roma, 2006; and International design competition for the rehabilitation of the Mausoleum of Augustus and Piazza Augusto Imperatore. Dipartimento VI. U. O. – Programma Roma Capitale e Qualità Architettonica, 2003. <http://www2.comune.roma.it/dipterritorio/augustoimperatore/regulations.html>

Meier is not simply *an* architect—he is one of the iconic figures of contemporary American culture known throughout the world, he is one of the star architects like Frank Gehry, Renzo Piano, Jean Nouvel, Norman Foster or Tadao Ando, whose works are to be found in numerous metropolises around the globe. Meier, with his resolutely held classic modern style, designed, for instance, the Museum für Angewandte Kunst of Frankfurt, the building of the Getty Center in the hills above Los Angeles and the building of MACBA, the Museu d'art Contemporani de Barcelona. The choice of a cosmopolite of German-Jewish origin, who invariably dreams up white buildings, nicely fitted the trend which endeavoured to enhance the fame of local collections and institutions by commissioning famous architects to design the host buildings. What can be expected from Meier is fairly predictable in the knowledge of his reliably consistent life work, which includes numerous magnificent buildings. Meier's radical purism developed under the influence of Le Corbusier was not alien—on paper—to the modern Italian urban landscape, since the ideals and aesthetics of rationalism could be carried on by Italian architects—complying with Mussolini's orders at times, as in the case of EUR. It is not surprising, then, that Meier's *Ara Pacis* museum lives up to advance expectations. In designing the white glass brick shaped building that was to be much larger than Morpurgo's black column lined glass building, Meier had to keep in mind the existing inscription of *Res gestae* and needed to aim for transparency: the building was to allow a clear view of *Ara Pacis* from the square as much as possible. Meier's building easily complies with these requirements while the *Ara Pacis* Museum still shows an unmistakable resemblance to Meier's every other museum building. It is elegant, serene and composed: there are no signs of the self-centred indulgence characterising Frank Gehry's museum buildings, for instance. Meier does not rank his own personal signature any higher than the cultural context which he is invited to enter; a contribution to the history of the city on the bank of the River Tiber in Rome is adventure enough in itself. Meier, however, cannot create something different from what has justly earned him his fame: a homogeneous medium whose self-containment and predictability is almost embarrassing in Rome. Its high-tech purism undoubtedly satisfies the requirement of transparency between the river bank and Via Ripetta; even so, the entire building somehow gives the impression of hurtful



The building of the museum housing the Ara Pacis
Designed by Richard Meier, exterior perspective

Photo: Dániel Pócs, 2008



The transparent white glass building of
the museum

Photo: Dániel Pócs, 2008

detachment—precisely in relation to the story told above. The task did not simply consist in the worthy presentation of the *Ara Pacis*; it also called for a reflection on the *modern* story which dates from the age of Mussolini. The assessment of the symbolic order of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore—or the lack of it—will determine the fate of Meier’s building as well as the reconstruction work of the square currently underway.

Meier’s in itself perfect building has become almost inaccessible; it cannot as such have a share in the exposition of the urban archaeology of the square as a whole. On the contrary: it gives the impression of wanting to close the door on the recent past once and for all. The building of Morpurgo has disappeared without trace; although a model of the original arrangement of the Campus Martius is displayed in the new building, there are no allusions to Mussolini’s role.

This is all the more curious as there are museums in Rome where the complete reconstruction of some building and the collection it houses can be seen in accord with the spirit of micro-historiography. The Palazzo Altemps and the Crypta Balbi satisfy the norms of museology embracing the spirit of urban archaeology; it restores and exposes the *original* scene. Both museums have been recently inaugurated, the work of uncovering the past is still underway in the Crypta Balbi; neither museum is characterised by the virtual encyclopaedism of museum collections, where each historical age or style is represented by a “totality” created by the arrangement of objects. The Crypta Balbi is simply a site for displaying objects, relics from various layers of the past found at *that site*: it is a collection of local history in the most literal sense.⁶ The Palazzo Altemps presents the restored palace, the reconstructed Ludovisi collection and the antiquities all in one location. The visitor may explore the antique collection together with its renaissance and baroque interpretive context.⁷

It is a valid question to ask what the arguments are for a similar reconstruction of Piazzale Augusto Imperatore observing the principles of urban archaeology. Would we not unjustifiably *overvalue* the Mussolini-led design changes by recording them with painful detail

⁶ Daniele MANACORDA, *Archaeology and History of an Urban Landscape*. In *Museo Nazionale Romano. Crypta Balbi*. Electa, Roma, 2000, pp. 9–45.

⁷ Francesco SCOPPOLA–Stella Diana VORDEMANN, *Palazzo Altemps*. Museo Nazionale Romano, Electa, Roma, 1997.



Ara Pacis

Photo: Dániel Pócs, 2008

in collective memory? It may just suffice to say that—for a period of some length—a modern dictator stood *before* Augustus. Is it not wiser, does it not fit the spirit of anti-fascism better to *pass over* the episodic character of Mussolini in the story of the urban remembrance of the Mausoleum and the *Ara Pacis*? Are we sure that the traces of an act of urban aggression can only be preserved by leaving that intrusion untouched? The memory of Augustus' altar in the heart of Rome created a unique frame for the modern age dictator—for a single fleeting moment, from which the city later recovered. And is it not precisely modesty that this city teaches us with more lucidity than any other city?

Hitler left Rome on 9th May and never returned. He saw the *Ara Pacis* but he was merely one of a multitude of people who have been granted this privilege. And when new generations pay a visit to the memory of Emperor Augustus in the distant future, should they be reminded—and if so, in what manner—of the slim period of time, the archaeological layer which represents Mussolini and his age? What is the right scale to use in preserving the memory of a city?

The answer depends on the place in question. Rome only bears its own scale. Meier's Ara Pacis Museum is flooded with light in the evening: the star piece of contemporary modern architecture reveals the altar and excises it from historical Rome at the same time. The Hungarian traveller—who strolls along the bank of the Lungotevere, follows the bends of the river, now catching a glimpse of Meier's building and then losing it from sight again—is given the privilege of citing Ottlik: "But only the improbable August moon was looking back over Gianicolo at you. It was looking indifferently at Rome—the new one and the sparse, scattered stones of the residual stumps of the ancient one, in the sprouting grass beyond the Garibaldi Bridge that it had seen being built back then; it looked at us then carried on looking at the world without horror, boredom or expectation."⁸

⁸ Géza OTTLIK, *Augusztus Rómában (1947-ben)* [August in Rome (1947)] In *Próza*. Magvető, Budapest, 2005, pp. 304–305.

The disintegration of memory— the unreadable city

The 1956 memorial, Budapest

*“Places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories,
pasts that others are not allowed to read,
accumulated times that can be unfolded
but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state,
symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body.”¹*

0. The archaeology of space

If it is not obvious to the inhabitants of a city why a public memorial is displayed where it is displayed, this lack of obviousness substantially diminishes the role the memorial could possibly play in the life of that community. Memorials which could be erected *anywhere* at all will fail to fulfil their mission *everywhere* and will probably be soon forgotten. The success of erecting a memorial therefore depends above all upon an understanding and a creative moulding of the spirit of the place as well as upon a knowledge of *who* regard or perceive it as being relevant to them.²

When the Prime Minister’s Office called for proposals in 2005 to design a central memorial to the Hungarian revolution and freedom fight of 1956 (henceforth Memorial), it designated a location that carried every chance of success: the centre of Felvonulási (Procession) Square, opposite Városliget (City Park) Road. The location was warranted not only by the logic of Városliget Road running into Felvonulási Square but also by a historical allusion: it was this spot where the Stalin statue created by Sándor Mikus was erected in 1951, which was then pulled down by the crowd on 23rd October 1956 as a symbolic overture to the revolution. Later, under the Kádár regime, this was the—

¹ Michel de CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Vol. 1. Trans. by Steven F. RENDALL, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1988. (in French: *L’invention du quotidien*. Vol. 1. Arts de faire. 10/18, Paris, 1974.) p. 108.

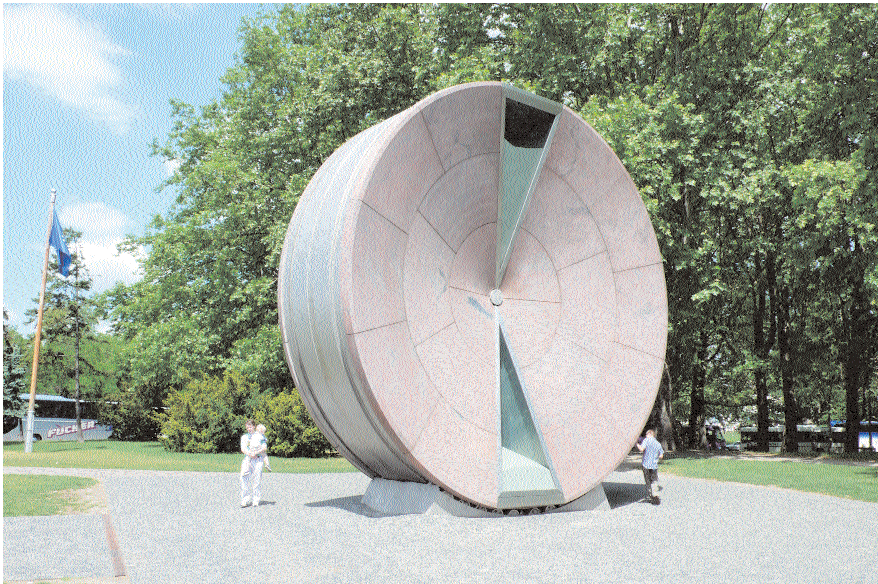
² Cf. Malcolm MILES, *Art, Space and the City. Public Art and Urban Futures*. Routledge, London–New York, 1997; *Art and the Public Sphere*. Ed. by W.J.T MITCHELL. University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1992.

substantially rebuilt—location of the podium from which, year after year, the leaders of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party returned the greeting gestures of the crowds parading below. The location is *authentic* then, but the question remains: What meaning does it carry for different people today? What did the creators of the memorial do in order to make the authenticity of the place manifest? Was the archaeology of the square uncovered? Was a spatial framing comprehensible to the greater part of present day Hungarians created, one which could allow each of us to regard the memorial as our own?

The answer is: nothing was done, nothing of the sort was created. Consequently, the Memorial can only bear any significance to those who already or still know what happened in 1956 and also know what happened *here*; but it remains inaccessible to all those who only have a vague notion of the events or not even that. The reason being that the memorial has no manifest connection with the square where, incidentally, nothing much has changed over the past few years.

If a visitor comes from the direction of Hősök Square, for instance, she will walk past Műcsarnok art gallery situated between the gradually widening car park and Városliget Park and the first thing she will see is the Wheel of Time perpetually frozen in its position. If the visitor wonders *what* the marble wheel with the sandglass inside it, which was obviously created with meticulous care and at a considerable cost, could be a memorial of, she will come to the vacuous conclusion that it is a memorial of time or—slightly closer to the truth, perhaps—of an intellectual consciousness with a mission but without much concern for the norms of public art.⁵ The spectacle gives no hint as to the reason *why* this is the square and this is the spot where the Wheel of Time stands. If various individual whims are allowed to take over some public space, *the entire space becomes unreadable*. If our imaginary visitor walks on towards the Memorial,

⁵ The unsolvable aesthetic problem of the Wheel of Time comes from a misconception. This memorial is superficial and vacuous banality itself. Trying to translate different linguistic turns related to the passing of time into the language of space and visibility amounts to genuine, naive kitsch. Not to mention the fact that time has different meanings for astronomy, geology and historical memory. Finding associations between these distinct chronologies is an aesthetic question—not a tautology, as presumed and presented by the Wheel of Time. There may be no reason, of course, why a *memorial of emptiness* should not be devoid of all meaning, but its effect on the square as a whole is not at all as harmless as was assumed by its naive designers. It testifies to the lack of dialogues on public art in connection with the development of the entire square.



Wheel of Time

Architect: István Janáky, 2002

Photo: Péter György, 2008

she will literally need to fight her way through everything the city throws in her path: the filth carried this way by the wind and crowds of her compatriots waiting for the coaches of travel agencies, before she can finally catch a glimpse of what she has come to see.

She will not be aware, for instance, that she has just walked through the spot where the statue of Lenin stood at the time of the Kádár regime—there are no signs to remind her. The statue made by Pál Pátzay was erected in 1970 on the stretch of the square between Műcsarnok art gallery and the current site of the Memorial. It was overlooked in creating the spatial context of the Memorial, which has certainly contributed to the stranded character of the composition. Marking its site would have evoked the spirit of the era, the absence of which here, in this square, is at best peculiar. The display of the statue of Lenin was, after all, one of the cautious but nevertheless overt manifestations of the Kádár regime distancing itself from Rákosi's dictatorship. The Stalin statue of old had stood isolated, high up on a colossal pedestal; Pátzay's contemplative statue of Lenin, distinctively mirroring the aesthetic preferences of György Aczél,⁴ was placed close to street level. Mikus's Stalin was monumental, Pátzay's work was familiar. An allusion to the former presence of the statue of Lenin here would have been important in a number of respects. First, the path to the memory of the revolution runs, both literally and metaphorically, via the Kádár regime and its

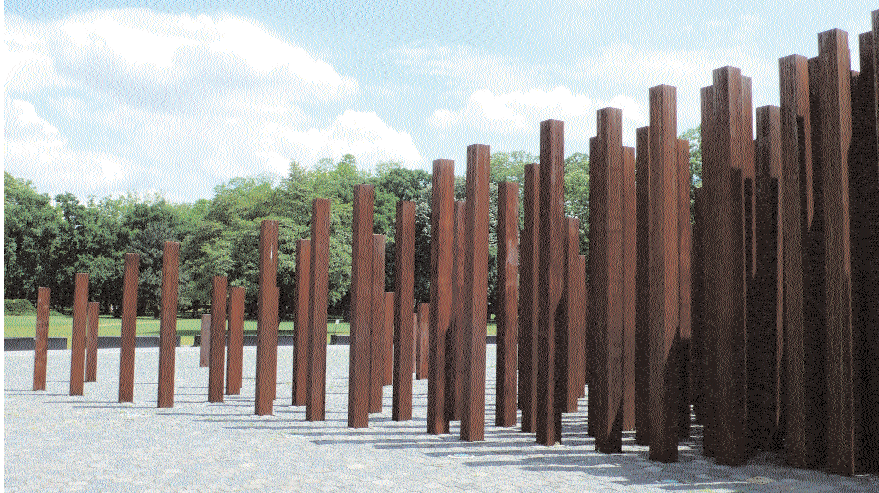
⁴ Aczél was one of the most influential, leading Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) politicians of the post-1956 era. He played a decisive role in shaping the culture-political image of the Kádár era. His extensive personal connections and his relationship with János Kádár, the MSZMP premier, allowed him to influence cultural policies and practices to a far greater extent than his formal status in the administration could otherwise have made it possible.

Aczél initiated the introduction of the culture policy that became known as the "three Ts" after the first letters of the Hungarian verbs characterising its principles (August 6th, 1957), which stated the following: some artworks were useful for power and these were to be supported (*támogatott*); some artworks were harmful and these were to be banned (*tiltott*). He added the loosely defined category of "tolerated" (*tűrt*) as a new concept.

Aczél pursued an informal strategy centred around personal connections. He won artists over to the ruling power through an "offensive favour programme." He believed that this method of personal guidance was to suppress the vulgar administrative methods of the ruling power. He strengthened the concept of taboo in an effort to open up the way to freedom of speech beyond taboos—there was a ban, for instance, on debating the legitimacy of power or asking questions about the presence of Soviet troops, and the events of 1956 could only be referred to as a counter-revolution, etc. His main contribution was, perhaps, that he persuaded large groups of people that it was necessary to make compromises.



The 1956 memorial, Budapest
 Creator i-Ypszilon group, Tamás Emődi-Kiss
 Katalin György, Csaba Horváth, Tamás Papp, 2006
Photo: Péter György, 2008



The 1956 memorial, Budapest
 Creator i-Ypszilon group, Tamás Emődi-Kiss
 Katalin György, Csaba Horváth, Tamás Papp, 2006
Photo: Péter György, 2008

material heritage. Second, it would help interpret the Memorial's allusion to the old podium.

When the visitor walks around the Memorial, she encounters an undeniably coherent spatial realisation of an abstract form and an illustrative, *literary* narrative. The metal coated structure shaping a large triangle—or wedge—is intended by its creators to disengage from the empty square covered in cobblestones of by now historical interest. While a wedge looms in front of the visitor looking from the direction of Felvonulási Square and Városliget Road, quite a different sight is presented to someone arriving from the Park: the spectator may meander among increasingly densely arranged elongated rusty steel blocks of varying heights until they close up at the other end. The architectural metaphor is almost alarmingly clear: the abstract pieces in fact stand for the ever denser crowd of demonstrators. The surface of the steel blocks also changes gradually: on the Park side they are covered in rust, as we move forward along the wedge the rust is replaced by stainless steel. The visitor may walk forward among the columns *inside* the memorial for a while and then will need to come out—the columns close up blocking the way—and walk around on the *outside*.

Let us look at two examples from abroad (incidentally echoed by the formal elements of the Memorial), which radically differ from the one in Felvonulási Square in precisely this respect. The shaping of the Memorial evokes Maya Lin's *Vietnam Memorial* located in Washington; its similar wedge shape, however, acts as a V-shape and invites its visitors inside rather than force them out. Lin's work creates a space to complete the pilgrimage and this constitutes a dramatic difference. The situation is similar with the other memorial, the *Holocaust Mahnmal* of Berlin designed by Peter Eisenmann, which is evoked by the increasingly dense arrangement of standing blocks. The labyrinth of the Mahnmal recalls the immeasurable destitution, the profound loneliness in parallel with the elemental joy of liberation. Commemoration and grief, the stroll among the black blocks, the sight of Berlin intermittently popping up in between the endless rows create the experience of time travel with an overwhelming force. The whole of the spatial structure of the memorial is accessible both here and in Washington, creating countless opportunities for the visitor to perform the task of mourning: to do what they have come for. The Memorial in Felvonulási Square does not cater for

those in mourning: those who are here to seek a sensory answer to their *personal* anguish, who have carried the weight of their unspeakable memories for decades. The designers of the Memorial clearly meant to follow a path of aesthetic asceticism but the outcome is better described as manneristic. Since the memorial in Felvonulási Square remains silent on mourning, it seems to suggest that the revolution of 1956 was *victorious*. That is, the abstract wedge pushing against Városligeti Road commemorating the heroic and victorious crowd: is an embarrassing error.

The Lenin statue is not the only object that remained left out: the Memorial makes no mention of the monumental cross commemorating Regnum Marianum either. When in 1950, at the time when the Stalin statue was erected, the square was modelled into the structure it still has today, the Church of Regnum Marianum, which stood in the corner of the Park, was demolished. Later, in 1969, a memorial to the Hungarian Soviet Republic⁵ created by István Kiss as a three dimensional rendering of Róbert Berény's poster from 1919 was erected in its place, testifying to the cynicism of the Kádár regime and its contempt for the Catholic Church. István Kiss's sculpture, along with Pátzay's Lenin, was transferred to the Statue Park in 1989; now only Western tourists pose in front of them and on them for the camera. The spiral pedestal was left here, however, it was padded out a little, flower beds were planted in its centre and a plaque narrating the story of Regnum Marianum was mounted on it. But the Memorial cannot relate to this closely associated cross in its immediate neighbourhood: it regards the cross invisible, similarly to the Lenin Statue. As a result, the Memorial isolates itself from the structural

⁵ The Hungarian Soviet Republic (March 21st–August 6th, 1919), Béla Kun was its most influential leader.

Act XXVI of April 2nd, 1919 of the Revolutionary Governing Soviet, the governing body of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, is highly revealing: §1 of the document titled "*The Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*" declares:

"The goal of the Hungarian Soviet Republic is to abolish the capitalist system of production and social organisation and to establish a socialist system of production and social organisation. The means to achieve the goal consists in securing the rule of the workers over the exploiters. The working masses in workers', soldiers' and farmers' councils pass and execute laws and are the judges of those who fail to observe the laws."

The right evaluation of this brief period in the history of Hungary is still subject to debate today, since the events of nationalisation and expropriation and the "red terror" were accompanied by achievements such as equality for women, wider-scale social insurance and eight-hour working days.

ensemble of the square, from the tightly pressed layers of historical reminders.

Felvonulási Square, with Dózsa György Road, therefore remains an urban square just like any other: teeming with allusions, deep hidden traces, barely interpretable signs. It is under perpetual transformation as dictated by various interests, the constantly changing concerns of its denizens and the city population; the events of the present and the traces of historical memory live side by side here. This is quite discomfiting. The square shows no signs of literal or metaphorical calm or spaciousness, which are characteristic components of every classic remembrance culture; components which are built into sites of commemoration to allow them to fulfil their function. There are reasons for this. The memorial to the Hungarian revolution is surrounded by a space which is just as difficult to read, just as difficult to decipher with its fragments, debris and ruins as is the *historical memory*, which it was created to commemorate. The half a century that has passed since 1956 has not been long enough to reach anything like a consensus as to the correct evaluation of the revolution. What really happened between 23rd October and 4th November and then up to the winter of 1957 is more and more obscured by the various panorama pictures painted by different memories.

Could it have been otherwise? Is this not an inevitable outcome? Is there an urban space which is not a *palimpsest*; is there a city whose “fortune” can be read? A place of remembrance and memorialisation may only attain solemnity—and thus distinction—if and when it is also a site of transparent, easy to follow, dramatically arranged archaeological discovery. The great potential of a memorial lies in its ability to transform the past into a silent theatre piece in a continually changing time frame. And in what other way could the unfailing staging of a space be guaranteed if not by making its traces of the past easy to follow—that is, by making the city readable? The consensus needed to commend public memorials⁶ can only

⁶ The inseparability of urban archaeology from the spirit of the place is nicely illustrated by present day Berlin’s policy of the past. An especially apt example is the open-air memorial of “Topographie des Terrors, Gestapo, SS und Reichssicherheitshauptamt.” The memorial site, Denkstätte, is located on the spot where the Gestapo headquarters once stood and demands active participation and contemplation. National Socialism is not a forgotten shadow in the present image of the city but a *heritage* the terrors of which are unavoidably remembered by all, whether they so wish or not, and which is kept on record with meticulous care.



The monumental cross commemorating Church
of Regnum Marianum

Photo: Péter György, 2008

be reached by uncovering and exposing the archaeology of historical time. The political will behind cultural spaces takes shape either in democratic processes or with arrogant incomprehension, as was the case here.

The failure of the 1956 memorial appears to have been inevitable in view of the events leading up to it. The circumstances of its erection were not particularly promising either. Various kinds of consensus are needed for public monuments—especially political, historical memorials—to comply with cultural practices which are important from the perspective of “remembrance policy” and thus to be acceptable to the great majority of the community. The Memorial ought to have represented the whole of present day Hungarian society: a virtual community as the target of its allusion network. There were some who—while partners in the hypothetical consensus—did not give their approval to the memorial. Although the Prime Minister’s Office wanted something more than an ostensible consensus on paper, a significant proportion of organisations concerned with 1956 deemed the designs of the winning proposal and then the visual experience of the Memorial under construction quite unacceptable. The voices of protest of course included an inseparably mingled combination of elemental mistrust felt by the participants of the revolution towards the Hungarian Socialist Party,⁷ dissatisfaction with the proposal evaluation process and with the aesthetic value of the design. The government at first ignored the protestations of the 1956 organisations and later accorded them a smaller sum to build *their own* memorial on Műegyetem Road, another spot in the city with a major role in the events history of the revolution and one which has become an important location for Hungarian right-wing political gatherings in recent years. At the very moment when the phoney consensus of the *two* memorials was agreed on, it became apparent that the year of remembrance and the new memorial would have a large share in making the tradition of 1956 uninterpretable.

Let me bring up a seemingly remote yet illuminating example once again, which demonstrates that it *is possible* to create a public

⁷ Hungarian Socialist Party, founded in October 1989, is successor to the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party (MSZMP). It has been one of the political parties in the Hungarian parliament since the first free elections in 1989. It was part of the government coalition for the terms of 1994–1998, 2002–2006 and it is a coalition party in the current term of 2006–2010.

memorial where the authorities and the people involved finally reach a constructive agreement: I have Maya Lin's work in mind again. In 1981 a call was issued to submit design proposals for a *Vietnam Memorial* to be erected on the Mall—which is the square of self-representation in the United States—in the immediate vicinity of the *Lincoln Memorial* in Washington. From among the 1421 contestants who replied, Maya Lin, a young unknown artist was selected as the winner. The fate of the contest was *supported by the veterans* and was also followed with keen interest at all times. The memory of the Vietnam War was still recent in 1981 and its progress and closing divided American society in an entirely new manner for the 20th-century. Lin's memorial follows the aesthetics of abstract minimalism with gentle radicalism and yet it directly serves the interests of veterans: the active rites of mourning and remembering. Lin's memorial lists the names of the 58,196 soldiers who fell in the Vietnam War. The names are inscribed in the black granite plates in chronological order with an alphabetical arrangement within each year. The first name is from 1959, the last from 1975. Each name is clearly seen from eye level and is also within reach, meaning that a visitor walking along the Memorial can read the names and—as is often done by relatives and survivors—can make a rubbing of a friend's or relative's name on a piece of paper supplied for this purpose.⁸ As the story of Maya Lin's memorial shows: a contemporary, abstract monument free from kitsch, vacuous representations, 19th-century memorial culture and the heroic rhetoric of greatness can successfully serve the function of compassion and active remembrance. Nothing of the sort can be said of the work in Felvonulási Square. Although the names of those executed after the revolution have been displayed in Parcel No. 301 in Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery⁹ since 1989, this, also highly controversial

⁸ Michael KELLY, Public Art Controversy. The Serra and Lin Cases. In *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 54, No. 1, 1966/Winter, pp. 15–22; D. S. FRIEDMAN, Public Things in Modern City. Belated Notes on “Tilted Arc” and the Vietnam Veteran Memorial. In *The Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1995, pp. 62–78; W.J.T. MITCHELL, The Violence of Public Art: Do the Right Thing. In *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 1990/Summer, pp. 880–899.

⁹ Parcel No. 301: The new public cemetery in Rákoskeresztúr, on the outskirts of Budapest, is the resting place of the victims of the retributive measures following the Revolution of 1956 (including Premier Imre Nagy, István Angyal, Pál Maléter, József Szilágyi and Miklós Gimes) and people executed for other political reasons. It is an important memorial site of national history.

memorial site outside the city cannot compare to a memorial erected in the city centre.

The memorial in the centre of Budapest is an abstract monument for the intellectual elite—it disregards not only the history of the square but also the surviving participants’ and descendants’ need to mourn. It is highly likely that the memorial in Múgyetem Road will now become the authentic site of private remembrance and the heterotopia of Dózsa György Road has simply been furnished with one more object. But if a memorial does not develop into a cultic *memorial site*, the destination of individual pilgrimages independent of official celebrations, it will soon become just as uninteresting—“unreadable”—as everything that now stands in the square: the Wheel of Time, the remains of the pedestal, the cross... Another piece of the background—while the events of the present go on in the foreground: go-kart races, beer and billboard festivals, jumble sales, trade shows. The city and its population will ignore the Memorial as they ignored Pátzay’s statue of Lenin and István Kiss’s Soviet Republic monument.

1. Geopolitical imagination

The era of the cold war, the division of Europe, which also affected global geopolitical interconnection systems came to an end in 1989. The opening of the borders in Hungary and then the collapse of the Berlin Wall raised hopes even for the citizens of countries far away from Germany that the era of post-communism will lead *everyone* into the paradise of liberal democracy. Quite a few years had passed before it became clear that what the universalism of liberal democracy in fact meant was that global capitalism, rid of its traditional opponent, swept to victory apparently unhampered. Not many people thought in 1989 that the literal division of Europe into two, the existence of state socialism—to some extent independently of its momentary condition—had exerted a positive effect on capitalism. But it had: the citizens of the countries of state socialism often lacking civilisation standards acted as *hostages* for the citizens of the Western world. The *existence* of socialism, the fact of an alternative sometimes labelled utopistic had the effect of tempering exploitation and thus capitalism and democracy walked hand in hand for decades to the

west of the River Elbe.¹⁰ The people of Europe lived in the security of the welfare state now lost forever—let us not forget that homesickness may be felt for worlds lost in time or in space... Their peace and security was guaranteed by the humble and often terrible societies of people living on the other side of the Wall. Since obvious political interests demanded that citizens of liberal countries see state socialism as a threat rather than as a promise, it was advisable to secure them an honourable standard of living in the hope that most would stay away from Marxism's critical approach to capitalism.

Here is an example which takes us closer to the question of the collective memory of 1956. At the end of the film *Time Stands Still*,¹¹ which was an important work in the cultural aftermath of the revolution, we meet our heroes again on New Year's Eve in 1967, a few years after the post-1956 story closes. The presentation drawn in the style of a black and white documentary shows what has become of them in the world of state socialism. We are shown how different life stories came together in the sixties, how the rebellious main character tried to find his place. The man wearing a white laboratory coat and glasses is working at the research institute on the last day of the year as well and we learn that he has found a foothold on the fringes of intellectual life without completing university studies. The black and white frames show him injecting laboratory mice and he appears to show little interest in one of the most important institutions of Kádár era public culture, the joys of New Year's night promising carnivalesque extravagancies. The image of the "research worker" evokes the great myth of the Kádár era, the *utopia* of the homeliness of scant security: a brief moment of the country marching towards the future. The rhetoric and iconography of this image can probably only be understood if we place it in the broad and undeniably abstract system of interconnections I mentioned above. The young man living and working deep within the Eastern European world is seen in the light of the utopistic hope which was the pledge of social peace in those days. The image of the young man who returns from an existence outside the boundaries of society carries both the promise of a new, better world and the threat of oppression and unbearable orderliness.

¹⁰ Cf. Alec NOVE, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism Revisited*. Routledge, London–New York, 1991.

¹¹ *Time Stands Still* (*Megáll az idő*), director: Péter Gothár, 1981.

Many people saw that image as the apotheosis of the Kádár regime, while others as its ruthless critique. The film, the aesthetic domain of its creators was overall heavily governed by the reality of a *geopolitical fantasy*. People on either side of the wall had their own lives to find an answer to the question: which society is the one whose citizens are closer to the Paradise on Earth promised by both worlds? The decision whether to emigrate or to stay at home was an existential problem, the significance of which is unimaginable today. Which is the Promised Land: the West or the place where the heroes of the film live? The most typical characteristic of life in the divided world—and of 1956—is that suffering and hope shone through the most trivial images of everyday life; that is, nobody could distance themselves from the effects of life burdened or blessed by the competition of the utopias. There was no *neutral* cultural space before 1989; the cultural products of the cold war—regardless of which side they were made on—had to satisfy the expectations of two audiences at the same time.

The interconnection system of the utopia-driven determination of social imagination was a complex structure—which could of course be described with the help of geometric metaphors—with a programme and aesthetic credit which collapsed in 1989. In just a few years, the promise of liberal democracy, the illusion of the victorious utopia turned into a grim, complex global capitalism that disregards national interests, social pride and local cultures.¹² A new chapter began in the utopia, in the history of the future, which is dominated by the “risk society,”¹³ parallel modernities, new nomadism, and the reality and concepts of incomparable cultural and political universes.

1989 went a long way in transforming the socio-political and historical roles of the rites and institutions of collective memory. Over the past decade, the study of cultural heritage has become the predominant instrument of societies deprived of the promise of the utopia in creating political fellowship and social fantasy and thus the significance of the rhetoric offered by the turn in remembrance has intensified. The desire for a local “Gemeinschaft” (community) has grown into a powerful cultural force in the age of global “Gesellschaft” (society). As the concept of a shared future has melted away,

¹² Mark C. TAYLOR, *The moment of the complexity. Emerging network culture*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 2001.

¹³ Ulrich BECK, *Risk Society. Toward a New Modernity*. Sage, London, 1992.

as it has become unexperienceable and incompatible with contemporary social conceptions, the role of the pasts has gradually gained significance. It is a valid question, however, whether the kitsch collection of the peaceful pasts offered by the heritage has any association with the traumas of the historical past. Is it not the case that we see *the same thing* alternately as the kitsch of heritage industry or as historical tradition, depending on the political interests of the moment? Does not the memory of 1956 present a similar situation?

2. The revolution of the sunken world

Everything that shapes the remembrance of 1956 today is to a substantial degree related to the changes in geopolitical fantasy. The motivation for the revolution, the *testimonials* of the two opposing parties could only be understood and interpreted in the divided world. The inhabitants of the new universe have the collective experience of the surreal and obsolete character of Gyula Horn¹⁴ opening the borders in place of the experience of the metaphysics of the borders. The one-time geographical borders have changed; in 1989 the iron curtain became a historical concept of social time. What happened before the new era—such as 1956—has become worthless knowledge in the endeavour to find one's place in the new society.

¹⁴ Gyula Horn: Member of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP) and later the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP); one of the founders of the successor Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). He served as Prime Minister from 1994 to 1998.

At the time of the 1956 Revolution he was a member of the "*Steppenjackenbrigade*," the police force of the regime in power. He stirred up a storm on the 50th anniversary of the Revolution when he defended his 1956 activities in an interview given to *Die Welt* saying that his function in the police force that contributed to the crushing of the Revolution had been to defend law and order against criminals who had escaped during the revolution. Citing this interview and Horn's role in the events of 1956, Hungarian President László Sólyom rejected Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány's recommendation to honour Horn on his 75th birthday by giving him the highest award of the Hungarian Republic.

¹⁵ Miklós Horthy (1868–1975): Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary from March 1st, 1920 to October 16th, 1944.

He introduced the regime of the so-called white terror, had a prominent role in overturning the Hungarian Soviet Republic, in the partial revision of territorial losses following World War I, the ambivalent consolidation process in the 1920s and 1930s and Hungary's entry in World War II. Horthy's regency saw the introduction of anti-Semitic laws, the German occupation of Hungary and the deportation of Hungarian Jewry.

And those who still expected something of the past in 1990 needed Miklós Horthy¹⁵ rather than Imre Nagy.¹⁶

It is not obvious how to make the story of a bygone world presentable to collective memory—a world which has ceased to be experienceable reality and has become an insipid piece of culture historical knowledge and/or a source of nostalgia.¹⁷ The legality of the current Hungarian republic is in theory based, among other things, on the constitutionalisation—canonisation—of the revolution; even so, the legitimacy of political power today has practically no connection with the tradition of the revolution, in my opinion. The rhetoric of 1956, its political and cultural memory, is no more than one potential way of awakening a political ambition to create “national unity,” sometimes motivated by hypocrisy and at other times by genuine desperation—or else an acknowledgement that this ambition is in fact unattainable.

The never ending task of processing the past gains meaning in the hope of a shared future—as demonstrated by Germany—and this is the reason why it is not immaterial whether, and in what way, present day Hungarian society is capable of creating a narrative political space where the concept of a shared future is not a vacuous political

He signed an armistice with the Soviet Union in 1944 but was soon forced to abrogate it and to hand power over to the Arrow Cross Party leader Ferenc Szálasi, who served the Nazi regime unconditionally. After his abdication, Horthy was first a German and then after the war an American prisoner. He was summoned as a witness in the Nuremberg Trials. He emigrated to Portugal and lived there until his death in 1975.

¹⁶ Imre Nagy (1896–1958): A communist politician, Nagy served a prison sentence in the 1920s because of his political views.

He announced a government decree on the distribution of land on March 15th, 1945. He had various offices in different governments (minister for internal affairs, food supply and, later, produce collection). He was an important reform politician of the period following Stalin's death (1953). He was nominated Prime Minister in July 1953. He announced a new government policy, which was to break with the economic policy of strained industrial development and promised to restore law, revise agricultural policy and raise living standards, which had dramatically declined over previous years. He was, however, prevented from carrying through his reforms, as Rákosi and his allies soon suppressed them. Nagy was removed from his office in 1955 and even expelled from the party (the Hungarian Workers' Party)—he was not readmitted until the beginning of October 1956.

On October 23rd 1956, the demands of the crowd gathering outside the House of Parliament included Nagy's restoration in the government. He was restored as Prime Minister and on 1st November announced that Hungary was to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact and declared Hungary a neutral state. On November 4th, Nagy announced the—second—Soviet intervention in a radio speech. Nagy was executed together with other politicians after the fall of the Revolution on June 16th, 1958.

¹⁷ Cf. Péter GYÖRGY, *Kádár köpönyege* [Kádár's mantle]. Magvető, Budapest, 2005.

campaign trick but an objective that can become an evident reality through repeated, gradually automatised cultural practices. The competition of rival stories of rejected, unknown or disputed pasts and the ghostly, homeless places, memories and counter-memories they have left behind, the paradigm which is insecure in its every single element, the disappearance of a grand and perspicuous history all contribute to the marginalisation of several of the paraphernalia of solidarity and cultural co-operation, especially those which go beyond the frameworks created by consumption. In the absence of a consensus on remembrance policy there is no way to develop and maintain cultural practices, which are needed on a regular basis to allow people to have the concrete experience of being part of a linguistic, national or simply local community.

The memorial to the 1956 revolution has been erected in a society where there are only a few researchers and not many more surviving participants who are interested in the story of the revolution and its legacy—at least on 363 days of the year. Two dates, 23rd October¹⁸ and 4th November¹⁹, still cause some inconvenience for the government in power, especially if it is a left-wing one; it is on these days that people suddenly re-examine their standpoint on national unity or, rather, the lack of national unity, and contend year after year that the celebrations, the practices of remembrance policy, the public presentations have yet again failed to advance the canonisation of the revolution. The problem of the public celebrations of 1956 appears to consist in the fact that its memory is still not sufficiently—i.e., not completely—vacuous; although the events of 2006²⁰ indicate that it is fast approaching that target.

¹⁸ October 23rd: Mass protests in 1956, the start date of the Revolution and freedom fight. It is now a national holiday in Hungary. The Republic of Hungary was proclaimed on this day in 1989.

¹⁹ November 4th: Day of Remembrance in Hungary. The second offensive of the Soviet troops was launched on November 4th, 1956. It eventually led to the fall of the Revolution.

²⁰ In May 2006, a month after his election victory, Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány gave his closing speech at the closed-door meeting of the Hungarian Socialist Party in Balatonőszöd, where he presented his arguments to the members of the Socialist faction in defence of the reforms he proposed to introduce. Certain sections of the speech were later leaked: “[...] *we screwed up. Not a little but a lot;*” “*We have been quite obviously telling lies throughout the past one and a half to two years;*” “*Some people came who were not sweating over whether they’d get a place in the county government or not but understood that this fucking country was about something quite different.*” Many people were shocked by these sentences, some demanded that the Prime Minister should resign, anti-government demonstrations were organised. On September 19th of the same year, for instance, demonstrators

3. The aesthetics of unintended memorials—the radical alternative

The potential of unintended monuments or memorials has been around for decades, as observed by Alois Riegl.²¹ As the contemporary global urban context renders the *Denkmalkultur*²² (monument-culture) that emerged in the framework of nation states inherited from the 19th century more and more obviously invalid, so grows the significance of the aesthetics of memorials created with the intentional approach of critical spatial design. The monuments in question are those which were not *originally* intended as memorials but later *became* reinterpreted as such—through alienating critical conceptions that *transform* buildings or landscapes created for other purposes into memorials. This is not a novel process since objects lifted out of their original social contexts and transferred into museums necessarily represent the totality of the memory of their one-time culture. This is demonstrated by the special display arrangement that aims to reconstruct historical contexts in the style of Wilhelm von Bode,²³ the universally acclaimed scholar of German museology, as well as by open air museums, national parks and nature reserves. What the cultural

attacked the headquarters of the Hungarian Television. Several days of often unannounced demonstrations and street rallies followed and on October 23rd, the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the Revolution, there were clashes once again between the demonstrators, boisterous crowds, and the police.

Following the clashes, the issue of responsibility for their occurrence was raised with regard to: the police—because of its brutality; the government—as the authority in control of the police; as well as the demonstrators—the participants of the disturbance; and the main opposition party, Fidesz—as one of the main actors in the events of October 23rd. The police was heavily criticised for using unnecessary and disproportionate force.

²¹ Alois RIEGL, A modern műemlékkultusz lényege és kialakulása [The essence and development of modern monument culture]. In *Művészettörténeti tanulmányok* [Essays in art history], Balassi Kiadó, Budapest, 1998, pp. 7–48.

²² Reinhard ALINGS, *Monument und Nation. Das Bild vom Nationalstaat im Medium Denkmal – zum Verhältnis von Nation und Staat im deutschen Kaiserreich*. Walter de Gruyter, Berlin–New York, 1996. In connection with the decline of *Denkmalkultur* see: Rudy KOSHAR, *From Monuments to Traces. Artifacts of German Memory 1870–1990*. University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles, 2000.

²³ Cf. James J. SHEEHAN, *Museums in the German Art World. From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000; and Alexis JOACHIMIDES, The Museum's Discourse on Art. The Formation of Curatorial Art History in the Turn-of-the-Century Berlin. In *Museums and Memory*. Ed. by Susan A. CRANE. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, pp. 200–221.

heritage industry essentially does is to reveal the traces of previously alien but by now familiar pasts²⁴ in various architectural elements—cities, styles, even in entire urban environments—and mark the whole context as intrinsically valuable, something to be conserved with its “immutability.”

Cultural spaces that have been given a new meaning in this way include former concentration camps, for instance, which served various pragmatic functions immediately after the war. They were mostly prisoner-of-war camps or refugee camps after 1945 and in the early fifties. It was only a few decades after the Second World War that they were converted into memorial sites.²⁵ The decades of pragmatism, forgetting and marginalisation were followed by a different critical approach which created *museums* out of concentration camps with subsequent developments both in their architecture and in presentation techniques. The emphasis has gradually shifted to authenticity, and the camps of the present are theatres of horror where audiences come to explore the traces of the despicable past. This new function of museums as pilgrimage sites and generally the re-assessment of attitudes towards the historical past have encouraged the re-design of the architectural environments in several cases. The architectural development of Mauthausen starting in 1945, the memorials, the documentation centre constructed in 2004, reflects the development of the relationship of the Austrian state and society to the Holocaust over the past decades.²⁶

²⁴ David LOWENTHAL, *The Past is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – London, 1988; and David LOWENTHAL, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge–London, 1988.

²⁵ Harold MARCUSE, Dachau. The Political Aesthetics of Holocaust Memorials. In *Lessons and Legacies III. Memory, Memorialization, and Denial*. Ed. by Peter HAYES. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, 1999, pp. 158–168; K. L. Buchenwald, *Post Weimar. Das ehemalige Konzentrationslager Buchenwald, in den Jahren 1998 und 1999*. Photograph: Jürgen M. PIETSCH. Spröda, 1999; *Versteinertes Gedenken. Das Buchenwalder Mahnmahl von 1958*. Ed. by Volkhard KNIGGE and Thomas SEIDEL. Photograph: Jürgen Maria A. PIETSCH. Spröda, 1997.

²⁶ See for instance the minimalist high-tech building of Besucherzentrum constructed in Mauthausen in 2004. The building designed by three Austrian architects, Herwig Mayer, Christoph Schwarz and Karl Peyrer, in a style reminiscent of Tadao Ando’s work does not simply comment on the previous messages conveyed by the various stages of the repeatedly re-designed camp but expressly rewrites them. Cf. *Erinnern*. Ed. by Wolfgang J. BANDION, Stephan HILGE and Cathrine STUKHARD. Österreichischen Lagergemeinschaft, Mauthausen, 1998.

The Reichstag, reconstructed by Sir Norman Foster, also undoubtedly stands out among unintended memorials.²⁷ The building in Berlin currently houses the parliament of the Federal Republic and also serves—because it is a tourist attraction—as a debating ground of the spirit of German nationalism. With the reconstruction of the White House, the parliament administration building in Kossuth Square, Budapest precluded the possibility of a critical memorial function of this kind; the current proprietors of the building, the representatives of the Hungarian Parliament demonstrated insensitivity to history.

The most important virtual memorial of the revolution of 1956 would, I believe, be a significant piece of the architectural environment left behind by the Kádár regime. Dózsa György Road and Felvonulási Square certainly carry the potential of an inadvertent-unintended memorial site. Köztársaság Square itself could also have become an unintended memorial: one of the most complex scenes of the revolution also offers a solution. The building first occupied by the Hungarian Working People's Party, then by the Budapest Party Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and finally by the Hungarian Socialist Party offers plenty of room for reflection. The lynching event perpetrated by the revolutionaries besieging the building in 1956 was one of the few legitimising myths of the Kádár regime before 1989—the incident, however, has not been discussed since the regime change (with one very recent exception, which we shall come back to). Viktor Kalló's martyr memorial, which once stood on Köztársaság Square, has also ended up in the Statue Park and its place is now covered by a lawn with the "memorial stone of reconciliation" behind it, which is one of the most pathetic and hopeless memorials Budapest has ever seen. Notwithstanding the hundreds of different memorials and carved mortuary poles²⁸ that have been erected in the capital and elsewhere in the country, the memory of the revolution only lights up in certain ruins. 1956 is evoked by the Pantheon of the Labour Movement erected by the Kádár regime in the National Tomb Garden, with Kádár's tomb beside it: the image

²⁷ Michael Z. WISSE, *Capital Dilemma. Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy*. Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1998; and Karen E. TILL, *The New Berlin. Memory, Politics, Place*. Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis–London, 2005.

²⁸ Géza BOROS, *Emlékművek '56-nak* [Memorials of 1956]. 1956-os Intézet, Budapest, 1997.

of the bygone, abandoned, slowly dissipating memorial of the Kádár regime seems to imprint itself on the graves secretly visited or forgotten after the revolution. These scenes do not fit into the system of cultural space grid which has been dominant since 1989 (and which does not reflect historical associations, in any case) and thus cannot help raising radical questions.

One of these asks: what is it that makes a space or sign create the impression of void or loss and raise some kind of suspicion with it and in turn awaken a critical sense, a desire for interpretation? This apparently inexplicable suspicion, this ubiquitous “bad feeling,” the uncomfortable impression of homelessness—these are the sensations that “unintended” memorials have to offer. The phoney orderliness of Köztársaság Square, the semantic chaos of Kossuth Square with its ridiculous and simple-minded kitsch collection reminiscent of a sculpture bazaar, the mutual indifference displayed by the architectural elements of Felvonulási Square, the disintegrating Pantheon of the Labour Movement, the illusionism of the House of Terrors, the nightmare of the Statue Park—all these *together* still recall the image of 1956.

The question always remains: Who or what can awaken the dead?

4. Monumental grief, emptiness

Why do we need—or would have needed—a consensual, authentic memorial to 1956? It is much too late, after all. Memorials—as demonstrated by the sculptural brilliance of the Jovánovics memorial in Parcel No. 300²⁹—do not in theory have to stop at being the sites of purely ritual, vacuously formal cultural practices but may in some cases allow room for anguish and mourning. And anguish and mourning apply to those who have *survived* or, as a result of some cultural process, have a personal relationship with the events the public monument is intended to recall. The *Vietnam Memorial* in Washington, Maya Lin’s creation, was erected in 1982, when tens and hundreds of thousands of soldiers’ families sought the opportunity to

²⁹ Jovánovics Memorial: The winner of the competition organised by the Committee for Historical Justice in 1989. It was completed in June 1992 and displayed in Parcel No. 300, where it can still be seen today.

mourn not only by themselves but also surrounded by the respect of the American public. The *Vietnam Memorial* is proof for them that the loss is irrecoverable but not entirely futile: there *is* a community that remembers those who gave their lives for it. The situation is similar for 1956 but the response is one of resignation and hopelessness: I am not at all certain that the *few* survivors and the relatives of the victims could rightly feel that there is a community for which the subverted lives, the memory of the murdered victims are important, incontestable parables. It may be too late but the decades of forgetting and repression do not mean that people are incapable of mourning. Germany's example shows, for instance, that there are *techniques* that help overcome the neurosis that prevents grieving.

Let me consider a minimal conceptual artwork as an illustration, one which shows the kind of technique that can lead to the creation of a conceptual memorial. Susan Hiller's project of the title J-Street⁵⁰ is essentially a guidebook displaying photographs of street signs having the prefix Juden found somewhere in present day Germany. Judengasse, Judenweg, Judenallee, Judenfeld, Judenpfad, Judenstrasse, Judenloch, Judenstein, Judenberg. Photographs representing one or another detail of towns and villages. Judentor in Coburn, Bavaria, Judengasse in Gerhardshofen, Judenpfad in Landau, Judenhof in Würzburg. Three hundred and three pictures of streets, pathways and side roads in Germany. Some of the photos show empty streets while in others everyday scenes can be seen, contemporary German people who do not attribute any significance at all to the street signs above them. Browsing through Hiller's images arouses a strange feeling in the viewer: Freud called it discontent and it is the direct opposite of the expression borrowed from Romain Rolland, the infinite "oceanic feeling."⁵¹ The guidebook—in the format of a *bible*—arouses an unintentional uneasiness; this, I believe, is not unlike the grief we feel in connection with the death of someone we could never have known. What makes the Holocaust memorial sites and museums special and edifying is that they transform an abstract responsibility into personal commitment. This metamorphosis could successfully take place in

⁵⁰ Susan HILLER, *The J. Street Project 2002–2005*. Compton Verney–Berlin Artists-in-Residence Programme/ DAAD, 2005.

⁵¹ Sigmund FREUD, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur. Und andere kulturtheoretische Schriften*. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main, 2001.



Jovánovics memorial, 1992

Photo: György Jovánovics

Germany because the German people, after the last moment, balancing on the border of communicative and instrumental, personal and collective medial memory, *do not wish* to find their identity *without* remembering the crimes their predecessors committed against Jewry.

Almost nobody grieves for 1956 today. The few who survived imprisonment and are still alive have suffered so much pain over the past decades that it would be pointless and unjust to expect a calm response from them. Mária Wittner³² may have an abominable role today but that does not change the fact that everything that happened to her before 1989 irrevocably *happened*. Perhaps nobody sheds tears for 1956 any longer, almost nobody feels the loss of the vanishing shadows; ever fewer people remain who know who were István Angyal,³³ Árpád Brusznai³⁴ or Miklós Gimes.³⁵ Most members

³² Wittner was sentenced to death in 1958, at the age of 20, because of her contribution to the 1956 Revolution. The appeal court amended her sentence to life imprisonment in February 1959 and she was finally released in 1970.

She has contributed to the work of several 1956 organisations since the regime change. As of 2006, she is a Member of Parliament (won her mandate as a Fidesz [Hungarian Civic Union] national candidate).

The evaluation of her political activities and her public statements often of an extremist flavour is far from unequivocal. She was a central figure in the debate that surrounded the proposals to commemorate the Revolution on its 50th anniversary: Wittner was reluctant to agree to a joint commemoration programme arguing that one of the government coalition parties, the Hungarian Socialist Party, was the successor of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, which had been responsible for crushing the Revolution. She was also critical of the 1956 memorial to be erected in Felvonulási (Procession) Square (recently renamed the Square of 1956), which, she (among others) argued, represented suppression rather than a desire for freedom.

³³ István Angyal (1928–1958): Angyal had to abandon his studies in the 1940s because of his Jewish origins. He was deported to Auschwitz with his mother and one of his sisters in 1944. He was the only one of the family to survive the camp.

He was of a communist persuasion but he never joined the party. He was free to start university studies after the war but was soon expelled because he openly defended György Lukács against criticisms.

Angyal learnt a trade. He returned to Budapest in October 1956 because of the student demonstration. He took part in the fighting, he led the insurgents of Tűzoltó Street. He was captured by the police after the fall of the Revolution. He was sentenced to death and executed in 1958.

³⁴ Árpád Brusznai (1924–1958): In 1949–50, Brusznai was a teaching assistant at the School of Greek Philology of Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest until he was expelled. He then had a job as a cantor at the Cathedral of the town of Vác. At the time of the Revolution of 1956 he worked in Veszprém, a town over a hundred kilometres from the capital. He organised his young students into revolutionary groups but they did not participate in the fighting. Several secret police (ÁVH) members and party officials captured by the insurgents were saved from being lynched owing to Brusznai's firm defence of them. Nevertheless, as part of the retributive measures following the Revolution he was charged in a show trial with crimes against the people and with plotting to forcefully overthrow the people's democratic regime. He was first

of present day Hungarian society do not even know why they should have a bad conscience, since they are not aware that forgetting and indifference can hurt. They feel neither sadness, nor gratefulness. They feel nothing of the hopes that had been felt by those who were hanged; and who had hoped that the surviving community would know what they had done for them. There were a few days in the 20th century for which we continue to be remembered in the modern world. And it is precisely these days that have lost their relevance for us. It is an odd and gripping contradiction: a society which has vanishingly little idea of that which has brought its fame.

Neither does today's Hungarian society know who the revolutionaries were and what they wanted. The world in which they were at home has sunk forever. But those who still hope that a work of modern art and the numerous unintended memorials can succeed in inducing some sort of anxiety and awakening a sensation of homelessness and emptiness which approaches the truth in some way are not mistaken. Besides György Jovánovics's tomb in Parcel No. 300, the revolution of 1956 has one other monumental memorial of merit in 2006: a work of literature (the play *Kazamaták* [Dungeons] by András Papp and János Térey), which can of course only be seen at the theatre or read at home.

sentenced to "just" life imprisonment and then to death by hanging. He was executed on January 9th, 1958.

Brusznay and some of his companions were rehabilitated and re-buried after the regime change.

³⁵ Miklós Gimes (1917–1958): Gimes was a journalist, one of the most radical members of Imre Nagy's group in 1956.

He edited a paper of the title *Magyar Szabadság* (Hungarian freedom) during the Revolution and the illegal publication *Október Huszonhatodika* (October 26th) after the Soviet invasion on November 4th. He was arrested on December 5th and tried as a tertiary defendant in Imre Nagy's trial. He was sentenced to death on the charge of initiating and leading insurgent activities and was executed.

CECI TUERA CELA (This will kill that)

Hommage à S. M. (1944–2005)

Even the most cautious assessments agree that the normative institution of the modern—public—library is currently undergoing a non-negligible transformation process. The development of virtual collections, multimedia digital archives, does not simply launch a new chapter in the social history of printing but has decisive consequences for libraries as well. The issue is not restricted to the question of the Gutenberg elegies,¹ that is, a shift in reading strategies and traditions applying to printed and electronic texts,² but involves the future of the public institution as such. How could we maintain its normative function, what changes are taking place in the amnesic,³ presentist⁴ urban context built with an almost exclusive focus on the present, in which libraries have always been constructed? Besides silent, absorbed reading, what cultural practices could be established in the libraries of the 21st century, which have also become virtual and digital archives? Countless approaches and descriptions could be conceived,

¹ Sven BIRKERTS, *The Gutenberg Elegies. The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age*. Fawcett Columbine, New York, 1994.

² James J. O'DONNELL, *Avatars of the Word. From Papyrus to Cyberspace*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge–Massachusetts–London, 1998; J. Yellowlees DOUGLAS, *The End of Books—or Books without End? Reading Interactive Narratives*. Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 2001.

³ Andreas HUYSEN, Presents Pasts. Media, Politics, Amnesia. In *Present Pasts. Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2003, pp. 11–30.

⁴ Francois HARTOG, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme expériences de temps*. La librairie du XXI^e siècle Éditions Seuil, Paris, 2003. Presentism, i.e., the belief that there can be no valid experiences other than that of the present, has made a major impact on the history of the collections. It necessarily leads to the existence of an unbounded, infinite collection and heritage concept. See for instance, David SIMPSON, Is Literary History the History of Everything? The Case For “Antiquarian” History. In *SubStance* No. 88, 1999, pp. 5–16.

but I shall designate library architecture as my starting point in the hope of revealing the relationship between the fate of cultural heritage and the globalisation of digital contexts. I have chosen four examples—Henri Labrouste’s Sainte-Geneviève Library,⁵ the Warburg Library,⁶ Dominique Perrault’s Mitterrand library⁷ and Rem Koolhaas’ Seattle Public Library⁸—to characterize the situation ensuing after the emergence of the global, virtual collections of the archive fever, such as Earth’s Largest Library and the Google Print Project.

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The legendary sentence in the title comes from Victor Hugo’s novel, *Notre-Dame de Paris*. “This will kill that,” “the book will kill the edifice.” Let me recollect the context of the prophecy in the novel. The Archdeacon of Notre-Dame, Claude Frollo, is visited in his cell by a strange old man, the “Abbé of Saint Martin,” who is in search of his star and a cure for his disease. The archdeacon professes the superiority of alchemy—on one possible reading, the exclusivity of organic global interrelations—and sees architecture as “the marble letters of the alphabet, the granite pages of the book,” that is, it is not only the world but also architecture that he looks upon as a book to be read. The dominion of the constructed environment, the social space as an uncontested text may only endure until another, printed text diverts the reader’s attention. “And opening the window of his cell... the archdeacon gazed at the gigantic edifice for some time in silence, then extending his right hand, with a sigh, towards the print-

⁵ *Des palais pour les livres. Labrouste, Sainte-Geneviève et les bibliothèques*. Ed. by Jean-Michel LENIAUD. Foreword by Nathalie JULIAN. Éditions Maison-Neuve Larose, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, 2002.

⁶ Fritz SAXL, The History of Warburg’s Library, 1886–1944. In E. H. GOMBRICH: *Aby Warburg, An Intellectual Biography*. The Warburg Institute, University of London, London, 1970, pp. 325–339; Kurt W. FORSTER, Aby Warburg: His Study of Ritual and Art of Two Continents. In *October*, No. 77. 1996/Summer, pp. 5–24. Detailed bibliography at: <http://www.rz.uni-hamburg.de/rz3a035/WIL5.html>

⁷ Anthony VIDLER, Books in Space: Tradition and Transparency in the Bibliothèque de France. In *Representations* No. 42, 1993/Spring, pp. 115–134.

⁸ Joshua RAMUS: Seattle Public Library. In *Content. Triumph of Realization*. Ed. by Rem KOOLHAAS. Taschen, Cologne, 2004, pp. 138–149; and Shannon MATTERN, Plurality in Place: Activating Public Spheres and Public Spaces in Seattle. In *Invisible Culture. An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, No. 6. http://www.rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_6/issue6title.html

ed book which lay open on the table, and his left towards Notre-Dame, and turning a sad glance from the book to the church,—“Alas,” he said, “this will kill that.”⁹ Victor Hugo interrupts the story at this point, apologises to his lady readers and devotes a separate chapter to the interpretation of the above sentence. This extended tractatus on the science of architecture and culture—Neil Levine’s rereading of which has made an important contribution to the present study—is dominated by a radical rhetoric. Either—or. “Let the reader make no mistake; architecture is dead; irretrievably slain by the printed book,—slain because it endures for a shorter time,—slain because it costs more... A book is so soon made, costs so little, and can go so far! How can it surprise us that all human thought flows in this channel?... The grand poem, the grand edifice, the grand work of humanity will no longer be built: it will be printed.”¹⁰ It is not surprising that all this sounds familiar: the need to conquer distance, speed, the challenges of the new political economy resonate with contemporary preoccupations: will the computer defeat the book? *Ceci tuera cela* has once again become the metaphor of a forced choice, an either-or situation. Umberto Eco, for instance, quoted it at a symposium on the future of the book. The computer will kill the book, the global virtual meta-archives may kill the library.¹¹

Victor Hugo’s novel—as shown by Neil Levine in his classic study¹²—presented a serious and personal challenge to Henri Labrouste, who belonged to the post-classicist generation of architects and worked under the spell of Greek architecture and romanticism. The Sainte-Geneviève library, Labrouste’s magnum opus was in this respect a reply to Hugo’s radical architectural diagnosis in so far as the methods and technologies of the symbolic control over public

⁹ Victor HUGO, *Notre-Dame de Paris 1482*. Trans. by Isabel F. HAPGOOD. The Project Gutenberg Etext. <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/hback10.txt>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “McLuhan, comparing a Manhattan discotheque to the Gutenberg Galaxy, said ‘Ceci tuera cela.’ One of the main concerns of this symposium has certainly been that *ceci* (the computer) *tuera cela* (the book). We know enough about *cela* (the book), but it is uncertain what is meant by *ceci* (computer)” Umberto ECO, Afterword. In *The Future of Book*. Ed. by Geoffrey NUNBERG. California University Press, Berkeley—Los Angeles, 1996, pp. 295–298.

¹² Neil LEVINE, *The Book and the Building: Hugo’s Theory of Architecture and Labrouste’s Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève*. In *The Beaux-Arts and Nineteenth-Century French Architecture*. Ed. by Robin MIDDLETON. Thames and Hudson, London, 1982, pp. 138–174.

social spaces are inseparable from the spiritual inclinations of the era. What could be a more compelling critique of Hugo's text than the construction of a library building? "By 1830 no other machine could have been said to have affected communication so profoundly as the printing-press and thus to have explained the ever-decreasing sphere of architecture's influence. The analogy of the printed book allowed architecture to break out of the confines of classicism and develop a functional form of expression, and thus ever since Hugo declared the death of architecture as society's principal means of expression, the issue has been to make architecture out of building"¹³ writes Levine in his essay. That is, the tradition of library architecture offers an excellent opportunity for self criticism. Labrouste's building is located in the heart of the Latin Quarter together with Soufflot's dramatically mapped Panthéon, the École Normale of the dead,¹⁴ which would in time receive Victor Hugo, among others. And here stands also the legendary school, the Lycée of Henry IV. The library, in addition to its function as a public bibliotheca, has been a haven for students and scholars since its very first moments. The enormous uninterrupted block of the building and its facade overlooking the square present a forceful contrast to Soufflot's mapping, which conforms to the principles of basilica architecture with its portico of columns and dominant dome. The exterior of Soufflot's building irresistibly reigns over its surroundings, no eyes can elude its sight, while Labrouste's creation is something to be read instead, something to be discovered slowly, step by step, page by page. The two strategies correspond to the procedures believed to be effective at the time of the construction of each building as well as to the social context of each era. Soufflot follows, or recreates, the tradition of the age before the advent of printing.¹⁵ The original church, also dedicated to Sainte-Geneviève, which went through a series of changes before it finally became the guardian of French national spirit and greatness—the

¹³ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁴ Mona OZOUF, *The Pantheon: The École Normale of the Dead*. In *Realms of Memory. The Construction of The French Past*. Volume III. Symbols. Ed. by Pierre NORA. English language edition: Lawrence D. KRITZMAN. Trans. by Arthur GOLDHAMMER. Columbia University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 325–348; Dominique POULOT, *Pantheons in Eighteenth-Century France: Temple, Museum, Pyramid*. In *Pantheons: Transformations of a Monumental Idea*. Ed. by Richard WRIGLEY and Matthew CRASKE. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, pp. 123–147.

¹⁵ The final version of Soufflot's designs was completed in 1777 and the building in 1790. Cf. Alexia LEBEURRE, *The Pantheon. Temple of the Nation*. Éditions du Patrimoine, Paris, 2000.



Sainte-Geneviève Library
Designed by Henri Labrouste
Photo: Eszter György, 2008

Panthéon of world renown—shows far more confidence in the possibilities architecture has to offer. Labrouste, on the other hand, created a dearly cherished object of self-reflection which belongs to the age of urban palimpsest, the kind of architecture which is to be read as a text. The colossal windowless facade reminiscent of a Roman aqueduct development displays 810 names in alphabetical order; that is, the building is decorated and at the same time earmarked by some seven thousand characters. The inscriptions cannot be read by visitors: they are located at a height beyond reading distance. (Herzog and De Meuron's Library of Eberswald from 1998 is a paraphrase of the Sainte-Geneviève with regard both to its block-like appearance and to the presence of pixels covering its surface—unintelligible, repetitive image details, memory traces of unidentifiable iconography.)¹⁶ The names are inscribed at precisely the height where—on the inside of the building—the bookshelves of the main reading room are mounted. The names of Shakespeare, Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Balzac—among others—on the outside and their works on the inside.¹⁷ Not to mention the fact that the surface covered in names, traceable but unintelligible signs stripped of their meaning, could rightly create the illusion of a book for the observer. Soufflot's work offers a spectacle of sculpturesque completeness, while Labrouste's building reveals itself through permanent use and slow, cautious exploration: it is like a book, which cannot be grasped in a single, inspired glimpse. Names are found at the depth of Soufflot's silent and inaccessible block as well. Books are enclosed in Labrouste's work, fame and dead bodies in the Panthéon. The central part of Labrouste's building is occupied by the reading room with the lingering reminders of Boullée's¹⁸ plans from some sixty years before: the outline of the vast

¹⁶ Anna KLINGMANN, *Datascape, Libraries as Information Landscapes*. In *Bibliotheken Bauen. Tradition und Vision / Building For Books. Traditions and Visions*. Schweizerische Landesbibliothek / Swiss National Library. Ed. by Susanne BIERI, Walter FUCHS. Birkhauser-Verlag für Architektur / Publisher for Architecture, Basel–Boston–Berlin, 2001, pp. 406–424; and Gerhard MACK, Valeria LIEBERMANN, Margherita SPILUTTINI, *Eberswalde Library: Herzog and De Meuron*. Architectural Association Publications, London, 2000.

¹⁷ The semantics of library walls covered in authors' names and their works also comes to mind in connection with Rachel Whiteread's Holocaust memorial in Judenplatz, Vienna. See Péter GYÖRGY, *Az emlékezés lehetetlensége* [The impossibility of remembrance]. In Péter GYÖRGY: *Kádár köpönyege* [Kádár's mantle]. Magvető, Budapest, 2005, pp. 81–93.

¹⁸ Etienne-Louis BOULLÉE, *Mémoire sur les moyens de procurer à la Bibliothèque du roi les avantages que ce monument exige* (Paris, 1785), translated as "Memorandum," in Helen ROSENAU, *Boullée and Visionary Architecture*, Academy, London, 1976, pp. 104–105; Adolf Max VOGT, Boullée Seeks "Cosmic Scale" for his Library. In BIERI- FUCHS, *Op. cit.*, pp. 227–234.



Names in alphabetical order displayed on
the wall of Sainte-Geneviève Library

Photo: Eszter György, 2008

visionary space of the Royal Library's reading room. The work by Boullée, the noted artist of revolutionary architecture, was in its entirety modelled on Raphael's *The School of Athens*, while Labrouste placed a reproduction of the same painting on a wall of his construction. A library building naturally and inevitably directs the architect's attention towards the events of history. Over the years that passed between Boullée's designs and Labrouste's work, that is, at the time of the revolution and then during the years of the Empire, the utopia of the great reading room with open shelves, which had still been alive in the 18th century, lost its validity. Boullée designed the vast reading room in the belief that it could function in practice. The image of the Library of Alexandria was alluring, but the growing number of books soon made it obvious that it was beyond hope to maintain a perspicuous—and symbolic—collection and a sacramental, iconographic space which did not pursue functionalism unflinchingly. Boullée's idea of a library is perhaps the last of the visions in the book universe before the Gutenberg era. In other words: this engraving shows no awareness of the nightmare of the Library of Babel. The library—in accord with the quotations from the School of Athens—is a communal place for wisdom, conversation, unhurried time and personal relationships, which is closer to a scriptorium than it is to the modern world, the enigmatic experience of amnesic cities. The great turn of the late baroque library is therefore clearly perceptible behind Boullée's vision: the story of the museum—i.e., the experienceable universe, the collection that represents world order—disappearing and being replaced by the abstract library.¹⁹ The standard of a collection which is encyclopaedic but can be perspicuously contained in a single room was still upheld at the end of the 18th century. A visitor entering the library thus crossed the border into an organised, symbolic space: the collection was proof of the existence of a world order within the reach of the mind. It is no coincidence that there was perhaps only one place in the 20th century where it was uniformly believed that personal experiences and knowledge could be acquired through books: Warburg's Library. "He [Warburg] spoke of the 'law of the good neighbour'. The book of which one knew was in most cases not the book which one needed. The unknown neigh-

¹⁹ Cf. Geoffrey GARRETT, Redefining Order in the German Library. In *Eighteenth-Century Studies*. Vol. 33. No. 1. 1999, pp. 103–123.

bour on the shelf contained the vital information, although from its title one might not have guessed this. The overriding idea was that the books together—each containing its larger or smaller bit of information and being supplemented by its neighbours—should by their titles guide the student to perceive the essential forces of the human mind and its history. Books were for Warburg more than instruments of research. Assembled and grouped, they expressed the thought of mankind in its constant and in its changing aspects.”²⁰ Warburg’s library, which is unacceptable from the practical perspective of professional library science, regarded individual sections of the collection as autonomous sequences and was substantially reorganised in 1925–26 when a new library building was erected in Hamburg with Warburg’s active personal participation and on the basis of his designs to a fair degree. The building was inaugurated in the summer of 1926 and even though it was fitted with veritably high-tech equipment—pneumatic post and telephone lines—for the age, its dimensions and its location within the city irreparably fell short of the standards expected of great public libraries.²¹

The ellipsis shaped reading room—based on Warburg’s model—is the antithesis of the abstract norms of a modern library. It is closely connected to Warburg’s views on active means of remembering, methods relying on the experience and appreciation of distance. The image of the elliptical reading room lit from the roof, with its numerous recent reproductions and interpretations, can arouse sacramental and industrial allusions at the same time. The collection was transferred to London after Warburg’s death and the Nazi occupation, and was finally lodged in a university building in Woburn Square after several moves and building alterations. The transition period between the individuality of the classification principles employed by the Warburg library and their inevitable assimilation into the library network of University College is still not over. The London Warburg Institute and Library is in this respect a research establishment of global significance and an invisible museum of itself at the same

²⁰ Fritz SAXL, *Op. cit.*, pp. 327.

²¹ Interestingly, Saxl did not find it important to mention the architect’s name. The library was designed by Gerhard Langmaack (1898–1986) with the assistance of Fritz Schumacher (1869–1947). The reconstruction of their co-operation awaits further research, but we know for certain that Langmaack worked in Germany at all times while Schumacher was compelled to emigrate because of his origins.

time—the heir not only of Warburg's books but also of his collection. As for the building in Hamburg, it was restored by the city authorities in 1993 with special focus on the reading room, the "Arena der Wissenschaft," and became home to the newly created Aby Warburg Stiftung. The story of the Warburg library thus rightly recalls the case of the Freud Museum, where the collection and museum were also doubled after the originator's emigration.²²

The Warburg library of London is still not a public institution, but its significance has long passed that of a simple private collection. Inasmuch as Labrouste's building proclaims a commitment to the spirit of printing, both the building and the collection of the Warburg library in Hamburg converge on the individuality and originality of books, on the question of the inseparability of communicative and institutional remembrance policies. It creates a practical and symbolic space cruising in the triangle of remembrance, iconography and archaeology. Warburg's great concern relates to the series of discoveries brought to light by cultural memory, the associative pairing of books and images. His reluctance to conform to the principles of traditional cataloguing was motivated by the same rationale that was behind the conception named *Mnemosyne*, an album of iconographic sequences unaccompanied by any text. The associations, the creation of montages also suggest that remembering is not the only means of opening up new dimensions for social imagination, and perhaps vice versa: the montages of cultural history and the series could bring forward as yet unknown memories. An active conception—one which defines the acts of both creation and remembering through the personal interpretation and experience of distance—was present in the way the images were handled as much as it was in developing the principles of the library. Fritz Saxl's work mentioned above as well as studies by Didi-Huberman and Philippe-Alain Michaud²³ show

²² Dietmar SCHMIDT, *Refuse Archeology. Virchow-Schliemann-Freud*. In *Perspectives on Science*. Vol. 9. No. 2, 2001, pp. 210–232. old; Louis ROSE, *The Survival of Images: Art Historians, Psychoanalysis, and the Ancients*. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 2001; Charlotte SCHOELL-GLASS, *An Episode of Cultural Politics During the Weimar Republic: Aby Warburg and Thomas Mann Exchange a Letter Each*. In *Art History*. Vol. 21, No. 1. 1998/March, pp. 107–128. See also the essay *Oedipus at Colonus* in this volume.

²³ Georges DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time*. In *Common Knowledge* Vol. 9. No. 2, 2003, pp. 273–285, and Georges DIDI-HUBERMAN, *Knowledge: Movement (The Man Who Spoke to Butterflies)*. In (Preface) Philippe-Alain MICHAUD, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*. Zone Books, New York, 2004.

that Panofsky's and Warburg's differing interpretations of iconography left their imprint on the interpretation of books as active memory traces, that is, on the construal of the image of a library of mythical powers.

The abstract library was a modern institution in the 19th century. The tradition of the reading room can be clearly traced, and it is only now that we understand how important it is. Robert Smirke's great reading room in the British Museum—constructed between 1854 and 1857 and rebuilt in 2000—has become a legendary site of cultural history, as has the reading room of the Jefferson Building—which, incidentally, evokes the Paris Opera House—built at the end of the century and housing the Library of Congress, or that of the Stockholm library designed by Gunnar Asplund and built between 1923 and 1927. And the list could go on, with everyone adding the great reading rooms where they grew up. The cultural world of the old Széchényi Library²⁴ reading room housed in the National Museum was quite different from the one now prevailing in the rooms of the library in the Buda Castle, especially with the new computers installed.

Before the advent of digital collections, central reading rooms had a *raison d'être* inherited from the Renaissance and then the Baroque world. This—from a practical point of view unsustainable—idea was the key metaphor of the library. The viability of cataloguing encyclopaedic knowledge went hand in hand with the pleasure of beholding a perspicuous space. Even though it was quite clear that the books on the open shelves constituted only a portion of the collection and that any specific work could no longer be located without the librarians' assistance, the existence of a reading room still meant more than a cherished but vacuous tradition, a mere rite. The central reading room was the place where scholars of the natural and social sciences, famous personalities and amateurs sat together. The reading room of the British Library was frequented by heroes of history. Let us remember Sartre's autodidact,²⁵ for instance. But who does not have personal memories of mystifying readers at the next

²⁴ National Széchényi Library, Budapest

²⁵ The protagonist of Sartre's novel, *Nausea*, entered cultural history as a metaphor of the amateur library user. Being unaware of the classification principles of the catalogue, this fictional character wishes to explore the authors in the library in alphabetical order.

table? The information desk of the reading room in Labrouste's library rises like a pulpit: the librarian is the priest of the morally unequivocal institution, who informs but does not argue, with whom we shall never stand on equal footing. We must recognise that the role of the librarian has developed over the past hundred years in harmony with the image we have construed of ourselves with respect to the place that guards the cultural canon. Whether it is one of hierarchy, whether it is one of democracy: the central reading room and its priest were a place and a role whose loss will be felt when the library interrelationship networks are no longer determined by the canon and the role and nature of the carriers and documents of knowledge are no longer self-evident. We shall learn what we have lost as we become familiar with the virtual practice of the global library.

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The library architecture of the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries has offered two—radically differing but equally forceful—answers to the question of digital context. Dominique Perrault, the designer of the Bibliothèque Nationale, or Mitterrand Library, appeared to respond both to Labrouste and to Victor Hugo when he accepted the challenge: *Ceci tuera cela*. That is, the challenge of designing a library which is to all intents and purposes also a mediatheque keeping books and computer data, photographs, audio tapes, video tapes and cultural documents recorded in countless different formats. *Architecture parlante*, speaking architecture, returned at the end of the 20th century: the four buildings are four open books, the empty space enclosed by them is a stage, the metamorphosis of French and English gardens: in practice, offering the spectacle of a wild Northern forest. The reader has four reading rooms, one in each of the four towers, in which to settle or else wander about: the world created by Perrault is a magical space even in its intentions. There is a very important difference between building and space: Perrault did not design a building but a universe framed on four sides. And it is not the reading room—the space, the temple of the rites of reading—which occupies its centre but an artificial evocation of nature which seeks to emphasise artificiality, the departure from the tradition of the garden. The construct of the four open books, the four glass towers (also serving as store rooms) engendered heated debates and



Mitterrand Library
Designed by Dominique Perrault

Photo: Eszter György, 2008

created several practical difficulties. The four towers, the four reading rooms are organised as follows: 1. philosophy, history and social sciences; 2. business, law and economics; 3. science and technology; 4. literature and arts. The replacement of the central reading room by four reading rooms and a central garden attempts—all pragmatic concerns notwithstanding—to give a forceful answer to the question of how to redefine the concept of the national library in the context of global media and the virtual reality of the internet.

The other building with a significance extending beyond its local role is the public library of Seattle, the work of Rem Koolhaas. Perrault's and Koolhaas's buildings are separated by more than ten years in time, which meant dramatic changes in terms of the advancement of digital global virtual collections. At the time when Perrault's designs were conceived and implemented the global multimedia archive was a feared vision (see Derrida's *Mal d'archive*) or to some extent a utopia. Perrault places the world of reading between, or below, four monumental building sculptures shaped like open books. His building is a closed cosmos, a world detached from the city of Paris: the location itself is far from the traditional city centre, and more importantly, the inner world of the library remains invisible, imperceptible for the inhabitants of Paris. The Mitterrand Library is the normative fortress of knowledge, the temple of cultural identity for a nation which holds the conservation of its heritage, its sense of identity and the admiration for the genius of language to be inseparable from each other. The Mitterrand Library is one of the grand projects devoted to preserving this spirit.

The work of Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas (and his OMA) is to be interpreted in a radically different sociological and urbanistic context in Seattle. It is a public institution in every sense, far from the SPL in its spirit, which was kept under public control throughout the construction process. Labrouste had invoked the spirit of Raphael, imitated Boullée. To the extent that Perrault had given a symbolic answer to the mediatisation and globalisation of urban space, Koolhaas gave a functional one. The SPL is situated in the Pacific Ocean facing centre of the city also associated with the world of Microsoft, among the numerous eccentric buildings of its abruptly emerging economy. Central Seattle has few connections with either European-style national or American-style imperial—see the Smithsonian Museum of Washington, the vast spaces of the Mall—self-image and spatial design. We are fac-

ing one of the most poetic products of Koolhaas's critical anarchism. Disregarding everything else, it is a giant sculpture come to life with lights and shadows. Library visitors inside the almost imperceptible inner space experience the dramatic effects of the series of lights outside. This building is at home in the world of eternal presentism. It is at the same time a bustling hub of urban existence, where the reading room is eclipsed by "other" functions—such as parking, meeting, group work and conferencing. Koolhaas built a mall, where visitors and readers experience a radically different self-image of cultural tradition. The SPL presents a series of activities as equal to reading—activities which are all related to the media space that accommodates this building as well. While Perrault's work stands enclosed in French tradition,²⁶ the users of Koolhaas's building are concurrently at home in Seattle and in the global multimedia archive. The two cities similarly differ in their roles: Paris is itself the museum of nation state existence, Seattle is the spirit of the 21st century—showing its back to America and the old continent, facing Asia and (more importantly) the world of communication. The SPL is as far as it could possibly be from the tradition the Warburg Library guards and hopes to keep alive. And this is not only about the admittedly patent difference between the functions of the two collections: one being a library for the general public and the other a collection assisting a few scholars in their inquiry into the means of cultural remembering. The way their relationship with the past, with historical memory is demonstrated, exhibited or eliminated in their architecture is equally important. The semantics of the Sainte-Geneviève Library—and, as we have seen, the Mitterrand Library—cannot be decrypted without the imaginary interconnections of the cultural space accommodating it. That is not to mean that Koolhaas's building does not stand in a cultural space. It is debatable, however, in what way its associations with the old past and the rising present and future could be perceived.

²⁶ Gallica is one of the especially important digital institutions of French cultural tradition, which is maintained and constantly expanded by the National Library. The website is an endeavour to organise the collections of various public institutions, museums, archives, manuscript registers in a common database where they can be searched from a uniform search interface, whether they be texts or images. The project is exceptionally interesting in a Hungarian context, as the question of presenting the various objects of cultural heritage in a single digital context has engendered a number of moderately publicised debates in recent years but is far from practical planning for the moment.

The British Library, the Library of Congress, the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the SPL and the Széchényi Library are successors of the Library of Alexandria, in so far as all these national libraries have always sought to be encyclopaedic to the extent their circumstances, their historical situation and cultural context have so allowed. But none of them have threatened with the monstrosity of completeness that we know from Borges's *Library of Babel*,²⁷ where there is only one copy of every book. This does not occur in the libraries positioned in the spaces of history; they adopt the standards of the *dépôt légal*: the mandatory copy is never a single copy in reality.

The programme of reconstructing the Library of Alexandria, or of Babel, creating completeness and encyclopaedism in a literal sense has recently stopped being a metaphor and become a virtual reality—and it is this change that needs to be interpreted. The question is, once again, whether the inscription on the wall is unmistakable: *Ceci tuera cela*. Whether the danger we should fear is that the fever of digital archives will eventually kill libraries. And it is a fact that to some extent it has done so.

How are we to build digital archives? This question is answered by a pragmatic narrative which I respect but shall not follow here. I shall attempt to reconstruct it with proper impartiality.²⁸ Those who follow this narrative do not ask where the road we tread comes from or where it leads to; they ask instead how digital collections could be made accessible—to all.²⁹ If we then contend that technical facilities are a necessary endowment, the questions point to the economic and sociological consequences of operation. How to build ELL (Earth's Largest Library) as conceptualised by Steve Hoffman; what problems of construction will be encountered? While the lib-

²⁷ In Jorge Luis BORGES, *Labyrinths: selected stories & other writings*, Ed. by Donald A. YATES–James E. IRBY, New Directions, New York, 1964, pp. 51–58.

²⁸ Christine L. BORGMAN, *From Gutenberg to the Global Information Infrastructure. Access to Information in the Networked World*. MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts–London, 2000.

²⁹ Leslie CHAN–Sely COSTA, Participation in the Global Knowledge Commons: Challenges and Opportunities for Research Dissemination in Developing Countries. In *New Library World*, Vol. 106. No. 3–4, 2005, pp. 141–163; Marija DALBELLO, Institutional Shaping of Cultural Memory: Digital Library as Environment for Textual Transmission. In *Library Quarterly*, Vol. 74. No. 3, 2004, pp. 265–298. Dalbello's study also deserves attention because it analyses sociological and knowledge sociological aspects in parallel: the dramatic change in the meaning of accessibility and the effects of digitalisation on the nature of texts.

rary of the past was made up of catalogues, books and the building complex, the—partly or wholly implemented—competing but mostly concordant collections of ELL, Google Print (New York Public Library, Harvard, Stanford, Oxford Bodleian, University of Michigan) and OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) show a different structure. Global libraries and the search engines behind them are of course language and culture dependent. The Google conception and its ongoing implementation has been highlighted by the manager of the French National Library, Jean-Noël Jeanneney⁵⁰ as a highly serious challenge, which is to be answered by Europe and France within it. His manifesto, which is regarded by some as a manifestation of googlephobia,⁵¹ was followed by a long public debate, partly in French but with a fair number of English and German language reactions as well.⁵² The cultural dominance of the global English language search engine is an issue which probably cannot be wholly appreciated from the perspective of an isolated and small language like our Hungarian language—and thus from the perspective of the future of Hungarian culture.

Territorial issues of traditionally pressing significance do not arise with respect to virtual libraries run by global search engines, or else are imperceptible by the readers. These projects are given great moral power by their role in demolishing the barriers of distance: they create a global knowledge network and allow access (licensed by various schemes of copyright and beyond, primarily through Creative Com-

⁵⁰ Jean Noël JEANNENEY, *Quand Google défie Europe?* Editions Fayard Collection, Mille et une nuits, Paris, 2005.

⁵¹ Jeanneney sees the issue of restructuring the library as a question of professional expertise, while the Google project is not built around traditional librarian or archivist expertise and objectives. It is a different issue that googlephobia is inseparable from the programme of rejecting Anglo-American cultural dominance. Cf. The French language. Google à la française. In *The Economist*, 2005. April 2. http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displayStory.cfm?story_id=3819169

⁵² Let me list some works here which I am familiar with and have found important: Rüdiger WISCHENBART, *Google Print Oder Wissen Ist Macht*. In: <http://www.perlentaucher.de/artikel/2363.html>, the same text in English: *Google Print or Knowledge is Power*: <http://www.signandsight.com/features/174.html>. Signandsight publishes the English translations of the most interesting articles in the contemporary German press. The discussion takes place on the internet, of course, mostly based on information accessed through various local (French) versions of the Google search engines. It should be mentioned that several English and German language blogs have taken up the issue, and a considerable proportion of these clearly sympathise with the problems raised by Jeanneney.

mons⁵³) to documents in a way that is unprecedented in modern history. Those who have been stopped at the borders of databases like JSTOR, Muse or EBSCO quickly learnt what it is like to stand by the gates of the promise of knowledge—and to have to leave not being in possession of a password. If the above global collections conquer the barriers of copyright⁵⁴ and allow access to researchers and readers from poor countries, they will redress a major injustice, which is encouraging and uplifting. It is also evident that these digital archives, libraries and museums have to face the problem of global catalogues and metadata—and overcoming this problem is a challenge that cannot avoid politics. But it is not a purely pragmatic issue, either. It is not an unreasonable conjecture that what we now witness is in fact a revival or perhaps a continuation of the cataloguing, indexing and categorising culture of the 18th and 19th centuries. The questions of classification—as we now recognise—have an enormous impact on the dimensions of cultural identity, orientation, familiarity and alienness. The activities of Cuvier,⁵⁵ Christian Jürgensen Thomsen⁵⁶ and Dewey—the founding fathers, respectively, of palaeontology, the three-age system of prehistory and library classification and categorisation—testify to the far-reaching cultural, sociological and practical consequences of the creation of typologies and classes.

⁵³ CC is a global network which allows authors to have control over copyrights or access rights to their work in case of digitalisation. Creativecommons.org is a virtual and global institution established by social scientists interested in web culture, which has made an impact on the licensing policies of several traditional institutions as well, including libraries, and quite possibly the designers of Google Print or the European search engine of the future. The virtual institution of the Republic of Letters operating at the end of the 17th and in the 18th centuries may be regarded as a predecessor in the history of culture. It created an invisible republic of literati interested in disseminating the ideas of the Enlightenment and established a strong system of cultural identity among people distant in a geographical sense, in their language and in their religion. Cf. Anne GOLDFAR, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750*. Yale University Press, New Haven–London, 1995.

⁵⁴ Cf. Siva VAIDHYANATHAN, *Copyrights and Copywrongs: The Rise of Intellectual Property and How it Threatens Creativity*. New York University Press, New York, 2003; and Siva VAIDHYANATHAN, *The Anarchist in the Library: How The Clash Between Freedom and Control is Hacking The Real World and Crashing the System*. Basic Books, New York, 2004; Lawrence LESSIG, *Free Culture. How Big Media Uses Technology and the Law to Lock Down Culture and Control Creativity*. Penguin Press, New York, 2004.

⁵⁵ Martion J. S. RUDWICK, *Georges Cuvier, Fossil Bones and Geological Catastrophes. New Translations and Interpretations of the Primary Texts*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1997.

⁵⁶ Christian Jürgensen THOMSEN, *Leitfaden zur nordischen Alterthumskunde*. Copenhagen, 1837.

Foucault had good reasons for suggesting that the archive “is the general system of the formation and the transformation of statements.”³⁷ Global classification—which by definition applies equally to documents of textuality, visuality and audio-culture—is a socio-political issue of paramount significance, whose weight is difficult to overestimate. All those documents which find their way into this virtual archive without walls after global cataloguing—i.e., after the demise of public inter-library networks—will become accessible and will be given the opportunity to take part in a row of great intellectual exchanges. The question of language is on a par with that of the global catalogue and it is not only the future of the French language that is at issue. Although one of the developers at Google Print brought up the possibility of changing the representation of languages using the Latin script—i.e., that we must concede that English is not the only language—the structure still remains, on the whole and in its essence, English. Metadata, at least, will inevitably be in English, meaning that it is this language that people will have to use to peek if they do not have a password or to slip through the door if there will be one at all.

We have not yet mentioned that the knowledge constructions created by the structure of digital documents, these constantly transforming products available in a permanent present are most probably not books any longer. The printed book became a dominant medium at a specific point of space and time—its future is to some extent determined by the moment and the European setting of its production. The protean documents offered by digital collections do not only raise the matter of the metamorphosis of questions of philology but also point to the appearance of a previously unknown “passageway” between the past and the present. Interestingly, the constructs of the new media simultaneously possess the potential of perfect copies, clones, which was unknown in the era of printing and the possibility of a continual metamorphosis, that is, the transience of these perfect copies.

The phrase has repeatedly come forth in this text: *ceci tuera cela*—the question now is how digital multimedia structures, or “documents,” may kill the book. Let us recall: only one copy of everything was deposited in the Library of Babel, while global archives do

³⁷ Michel FOUCAULT, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. by A.M. Sheridan SMITH, (1972) 6th reprint, Routledge, London, 1994, p.130.

not store copies but software, which are not end products but offer the possibility of creating further documents. These collections allow constant revisions, rewriting and new creations as well as redefinitions based on document sharing. If we consider new formats such as podcasts, for instance, we can see in practice that we are walking on very thin ice: in the era of continually transforming documents, individualised archives, protean concepts and frames. If we recall the 17th and 18th centuries, we can see that the library may represent not only the site of the collection but the collection, the compilation itself as well. *Thesaurus, corpus, catalogus, flores*—they were all collections, virtual libraries—is it not true that the intimidating novelties of the day like podism will suddenly appear tamed and familiar if we think of them as a slightly reformed version of the catalogue? And let us not forget that the other great nightmare of global archives,⁵⁸ unmanageability, the myth of the monstrous Library of Babel is also the offspring of the early modernity of the 18th century. Louis Sébastien Mercier wrote his utopia—or, rather (as noted by Roger Chartier in his overview of the cultural history of libraries without walls⁵⁹), his uchronia,—the *Mémoire de l'an 2440* in 1771. The hero of the text visits the royal library, where inutile, dangerous or frivolous books have been burnt because the overproduction of information proved to be unbearable, and only the most important works were to be preserved. That is: the constantly developing distinctions between knowledge and information are not the products of the present either; the cultural history of information overload⁴⁰ also belongs to the history of libraries existing in a virtual and social reality.

Digital archives are hybrids, they are governed and dominated by the conditions of the new media; the texts—it seems—are to be archived together with their virtual neighbours, their renewing contexts. That is, they preserve and mould the context of contexts rather than the documents themselves for the incarnations of collective memory.

While early global, universal encyclopaedias became threateningly impenetrable due to their greatness—they seemed to be simply

⁵⁸ David F. BELL, Infinite Archives. In *SubStance*, No. 103, 2004, pp. 148–161.

⁵⁹ Roger CHARTIER, Libraries Without Walls. In *Representations*. Special Issue: *Future Libraries*, No. 42, 1993, pp. 38–52.

⁴⁰ Daniel ROSENBERG, Early Modern Information Overloaded. In *Journal of History of Ideas*, Vol 64, No. 1 2003/January, pp. 1–9.

unimaginable with the power of the image—, the institutions emerging in practice, in front of our eyes must face the old problem, the socio-political question of global catalogues, as well as their impossibility: the overproduction and unidentifiability of information. But these institutions are also the carriers of previously unknown and still not wholly identified cultural worlds, the creators of previously unrecognised behaviours, value systems and canons. Archives do not solely guard the ghosts of the past as they once did but actively shape the cultural fronts of the future. If the spirit of Avant-garde nests somewhere today, this must be the place.

There was a time when the library was a place that we, with our hearts elated: entered. We walked along great stately stairways towards the reading room. This was, and to some extent still is, the case in the Széchényi Library and the Sainte-Geneviève, and as we walk along the corridors in the Bibliothèque Nationale. The library we enter is comparable to a church: it rises above the fabric of the city, everything is different inside. The book, the building, the catalogue—they represent the spirit of the place in unison. The archaeology of knowledge, this inescapable metaphor, is unimaginable and unintelligible without reference to geological layers. Stratigraphy, stratification is the basic building block of modern archaeology, which bares time, translates and elucidates the passage of time, is in a metaphorical sense available to us in the library. This does not hold for digital archives. The continual transformation of contexts, of spaces that create meaning gives rise to a new type of text, reader, interpretation, co-operation and creativity. Being absorbed in a text, disappearing in it like a Chinese painter in his picture, or wandering from reference to reference, being a virtual vagabond, drifting with the streams of pasts and presents. The architectural equivalent of the global digital archive—the *non lieux*, in the words of Marc Auge⁴¹—is network of super-modern spaces which are the same everywhere, which will not easily become a space for the *lieux des mémoires*.⁴²

The problem of global archives cannot be characterised without the tradition of libraries but cannot be grasped through them. We

⁴¹ Marc AUGE, *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Trans. by John HOWE. Verso, London–New York, 1995.

⁴² Pierre NORA, *Realms of Memory. The Construction of the French Past*. Volume III. Symbols. Ed. by Pierre NORA. English language edition: Lawrence D. KRITZMAN. Trans. by Arthur GOLDHAMMER. Columbia University Press, New York, 1998.

either attempt to make this world familiar through various cultural metaphors of the modern age, or cast that crutch away and construct those archives. Koolhaas's SPL building can be interpreted as a radical experiment, which was devised by the architect in an attempt to consolidate the physical reality of the library building with the media space. Perrault's work is the converse: it is an exemplar showing a way of marshalling the chaos of the global archive into the world of books. We are presumably not too far from a credible truth if we consider both as special cases of public sculpture. Whatever it is that emerges, it will not be a library in the traditional sense of the word. That institution denotes a place to guard documents of unchanging formats. A museum, that is. ELL cannot be erected like the Sainte-Geneviève or Dominique Perrault's new building by the river bank. The public database which we can call ELL exists in our own individual cultural space, as much and only as much as each of us want and allow it. The Széchényi Library is a public institution, ELL is the database of individual imaginations. The library belonged to the grand mythical plans and contexts of literature and the architecture of the time; it was moulded and shaped, to some extent also produced by social imagination, similarly to the library. Those were the real "government organisations" of modern society, the institutions that established catalogues, standards. The *Mal d'Archive*⁴³ is inevitable and it might after all kill the library. *Ceci tuera cela*.

⁴³ The analysis of DERRIDA's book, *Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne* is far beyond the scope of this essay. There is only one aspect of Derrida's widely and diversely cited text that I would like to mention—the capacity of digitalisation to transform global networks and the contemporaneity of archives. "But the example of E-mail is privileged in my opinion for a more important and obvious reason: because electronic mail today, even more than the fax, is on the way to transforming the entire public and private space of humanity, and first of all the limit between the private, the secret (private or public), and the public or the phenomenal. It is not only a technique, in the ordinary and limited sense of the term: at an unprecedented rhythm, in quasi- instantaneous fashion, this instrumental possibility of production, of printing, of conservation, and of destruction of the archive must inevitably be accompanied by juridical and thus political transformations." In Jacques DERRIDA, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. by Eric PRENOWITZ. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London, 1995, p. 17.

Clinic and church

The second museum age

*"It could even be said, I suppose, that some modern art continued to be produced after that—art which remained under the stylistic imperatives of modernism—but that art would not really be contemporary, except again in the strictly temporal sense of the term. [...] This tended to put the Museum of Modern Art in a kind of bind no one had anticipated when it was the home of "our art." The bind was due to the fact that "modern" had a stylistic meaning and a temporal meaning. It would not have occurred to anyone that these would conflict, that contemporary art would stop being modern art. But today, as we near the end of the century, the Museum of Modern Art has to decide whether it is going to acquire contemporary art that is not modern and thus become a museum of modern art in the strictly temporal sense or whether it will continue to collect only stylistically modern art, the production of which has thinned down to perhaps a trickle, but which is no longer representative of the contemporary world."*¹

"The museum must no longer be a palace but, as I termed it at the time of my first course in museology at the Louvre in 1941: a clinic. A clinic for masterpieces, a functional edifice where everything is designed to maintain the best possible conditions for the conservation of objects and to assure the public's comfort. Proud of their climate-control systems, curators hurry distinguished visitors

¹ Arthur C. DANTO, *Modern, Postmodern, Contemporary. In After the end of art. Contemporary art and the pale of history. The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts, 1995.* Bollingen Series XXXV–44. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1997, p. 11.

*through exhibition galleries, impatient to whisk them off to cellars to admire motors, filters and valves. In this clinical spirit two beautiful museums were conceived in Europe, Rotterdam's Museum Boymans (1935) and Basel's Kunstmuseum (1932–36) and one in the United States, New York's Museum of Modern Art, which was opened in 1939.”*²

² Germain BAZIN, *The Museum Age*. Trans. by Jane van Nuis CAHILL. Desoer, Brussels, 1976, p. 265.

1. The MoMA paradigm

It has been ten years since in his essay *Modern, Postmodern, Contemporary* Arthur C. Danto summed up, in connection with the future of MoMA, the—to some extent still relevant—problems of the relationship between modern and contemporary art as cited above.

In so far as the concepts and artistic practices of modern and contemporary are no longer interdependent—which is undoubtedly the case,—the former of the two may take its place in cultural history and in museums, while the latter becomes vacuous, relative and devoid of a meaning other than that of the word: current, existing at a given moment of time. The co-existence of modern and contemporary art—which was probably characteristic of a single lengthy period, the decades of Modernism—is no longer self-evident. The concept of contemporary art could be defined to include everything that the current artistic world, or industry, “produces” and it is quite conceivable that we might want to class only part, the *modern* part, of a particular art with *contemporary*. The continually changing relationship of the concepts of modern and contemporary is on the one hand reflected in the history of 19th- and 21st-century museums, and on the other hand, this relationship is also shaped by the practice of museums.

Back in 1997, of course, postmodern still to some extent stood for the then current *Zeitgeist*, and that had a significant influence on the conceptual inventory that governed the world of art. Ten years on, however, the interpretation of postmodern aesthetics, the “radical eclectic,” the pluralism of art—described, among others, by Danto—as an interpretive tendency has simply vanished, as we now realise, among the manifestations of the evolving metacritical approach of “new cultural history”³ and “postsocial history.”⁴ We have recently seen several examples of the rich opportunities offered by the criti-

³ *The New Cultural History*. Ed. by Lynn Hunt, University of California Press, Berkeley–London, 1984.

⁴ Miguel A. CABRERA, *Postsocial History: An Introduction*. Trans. by Marie McMAHON. Lexington Books, Lanham, 2004. In connection with the contemporary interpretation of the relationship between society and cultural history, see: William H. SEWELL Jr., *Logics of History, Social Theory and Social Transformation*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 2005; and *The Social in Question. New Bearings in History and the Social Sciences*. Ed. by Patrick JOYCE, Routledge, London–New York, 2002.

cal and relativised use of modern and contemporary in the climate that emerged after Postmodernism. The question is: whether it is still possible to chart the trends in the world of contemporary art from the perspective of the *post*-modern era—and if so, how. Is there a panoptic approach (a question also raised by Donald Preziosi⁵, Horst Bredekamp⁶, and Hans Belting⁷) which may claim exclusivity in commenting art—and if so, which one?⁸ The infrastructure that has developed around contemporary art over the past few decades—the world of biennales, galleries and travelling exhibitions in the hands of curators—revolves around invitation-only and *ad hoc* thematic exhibitions trying to comply with the local context; it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak of global trends, historical schools or modern art movements which are the start of a new era.⁹

If there is something the art world today, after the postmodern, treats with radical criticism, it is the diagrams drawn by Alfred H. Barr with so much enthusiasm, such as the legendary “Torpedo,” which represents the interconnections and periods of naturally and

⁵ Donald PREZIOSI, *Brain of the Earth's Body. Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London, 2003; and Donald PREZIOSI, *In the Aftermath of Art. Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics*. Critical Commentary: Joanne LAMOUREUX. Routledge, London–New York, 2006.

⁶ Horst BREDEKAMP, A Neglected Tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft. In *The Art Historian. National Traditions and Institutional Practices*. Ed. by Michael F. ZIMMERMANN. Clark Art Institute, New Haven–London, 2003, pp. 147–160.

⁷ Hans BELTING, *Bild-Anthropologie. Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*. Wilhelm Fink, München, 2001.

⁸ If the complex relationship between the two—museum and academic—art histories was ever true, it is now undergoing a major change along a number of dimensions. Cf. *The Two Art Histories. The Museum and the University*. Ed. by Charles W. HAXTHAUSEN. Clark Art Institute, New Haven–London, 2002. Besides the work of Preziosi, Belting, Bredekamp and Mitchell, the overall dialogue between “visual culture” and “visual studies” at one end and art history at the other end is also relevant here. Some of these authors, however, also focus on museum criticism in their theoretical thinking. The line of the Foucault-school representation criticism that targets museum institutions is now an independent branch of science with a literature virtually too large to follow. Tony Bennett, Eliean Hooper Greenhill, Sharon Macdonald, David Carrier, Susan Pearce, Carol Duncan and Douglas Crimp have made significant steps in allowing the critical reception of the second museum age to respond in merit to the fever of museum construction that we now witness.

⁹ Cf. Gábor ÉBLI, *Az antropologizált múzeum. Közgyűjtemények átalakulása az ezredfordulón* [The anthropologised museum. The development of public collections at the turn of the millennium]. Tipotex Kiadó, Budapest, 2005. Gábor Ébli's excellent volume of essays testifying to the author's thorough knowledge of museum collections is a very useful reading for everyone interested in the social and cultural history of the museum.

inevitably emerging global trends of art history, which cannot be changed by individual will. The Documenta¹⁰ and the various Biennales¹¹ have been shifting towards a critical representation of ongoing trends and have become apathetic to the norms of progress; they prefer to analyse the relationships of the present rather than establish longer term chronological interconnection systems.¹² The concept and institution network of modern art have at the same time become the objects of artwork, as demonstrated by Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset's conceptual installation *Powerless Structures—Traces of a Never Existing History, Figure 222*. The piece installed in the open air—in a public park, in urban space—was displayed at the Istanbul Biennale in 2001. It is part of the series *Powerless Structures*; a white building half buried in the ground evoking the geometric structure of modern museums under the influence of MoMA. The

¹⁰ Cf. the Kassel Documenta of 2002. The programme devised by art director Okwui Enwezor is essentially concerned with issues of globalisation criticism, neo-colonialism and democracy theory versus contemporary art. The *heritage* of modern art is also one of the three leitmotifs of the Documenta of 2007: Is Modernity our Antiquity?/Ist die Moderne unsere Antike? Contemporary museums and other institutions of fine art often become the arena of conciliation efforts and of the debates surrounding those efforts. Examples include the debates over the representation principles of The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, Renzo Piano's Centre Culturel Tjibaou in New Caledonia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongawera in Wellington. Cf. Kylie MESSAGE, *New Museums and the Making of Culture*. Berg, Oxford–New York, 2006.

¹¹ The Venice Biennale of 2006 was organised around the theme: "Cities' Architecture and Societies" and the focus of the programme was delineated by Saskia Sassen's critical essay on the subject of global cities. The main themes of the Venice Biennale of 2007 also appear to be characteristic; we should mention the Africa Pavilion and the previously held conference organised by Robert Storr, "Where art worlds meet: multiple modernities and the global salon." The Istanbul Biennale of 2007 took place under the curatorship of Hou Hanru and its theme was "Optimism in the Age of Global War."

"The biennial will focus on urban issues and architectural reality as a means of exposing different cultural contexts and artistic visions regarding the complex and diverse forms of modernity. The current mutation of the global art scene reflects the restructuring of the world order prompted by the inventions and realisations of different modernities and modernisation projects beyond the traditional hegemonic vision of the West."

<http://www.iksv.org/bienal/english/bienal.asp?cid=5>

¹² The cultural prophets of the mythology of the network deserve mention here: László Barabási, who lives in the United States, and several of his colleagues. Network research—its inevitable fashion-driven overvaluation notwithstanding—regards the culture of effect mechanisms as the object of its inquiry, just as the great comparative tables of classic modernity, which are based on the geography of the centre and the periphery, and the urge to keep pace. The "hailed" study of network maps is born out of the hope of discovering and describing a cultural space where the relationships between the virtual continents are not dominated by the power relationships of classic modernity.

visible fragment of the inscription on the side of the sinking “white cube” reads: “temporary art.” The pun (the new meaning resulting from the omission of the prefix “con”) and the conceptual installation are didactic: the gap left by the never existing narrative of modern art is filled by the reality of transience.¹³

If contemporary art, the infrastructure of the art world does not reckon with, does not search for and does not create a trend of development for modern movements, a consensus of their linear narrativity, the pluralism of posthistorical art—Danto concludes—will disappear.¹⁴ This is by now a cliché—which is not to be overrated but is still useful to keep in mind. Danto’s argument is quite transparent at first sight but it in fact raises several questions. The reason being that he finds a connection between the interpretative framework of contemporary art—that is, the choice between historical narratives and posthistorical pluralism—and the experience and practice of art establishments, with special reference to art museums. What he essentially does is translate the art activity known from late modern avant-garde art—museum criticism practiced by artists—into the language of theorising. Various works by Hans Haacke,¹⁵ Susan Hiller,¹⁶ and the Belgian Marcel Broodthaers, who died in 1976,¹⁷ for instance, all provide examples for the use and re-use of *museum criticism*¹⁸ by concept art, although in different political contexts and on different art scenes.

¹³ Cf. Wendy SHAW, Art Among the Myths of Globalism. The Istanbul Biennial. In *Third Text*, Vol. 16. No. 1 2002, pp. 94–102; Gregory VOLK, Back to the Bosphorus. The 2001 Istanbul Biennial was titled “Egofugal,” a term invented by the curator to suggest diffusion of the individual ego into broader systems and networks—Report from Istanbul. In *Art In America*, 2002/March; Terry SMITH, Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity. In *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 32. 2006/Summer, pp. 681–707.

¹⁴ Arthur C. DANTO, Learning to Live with Pluralism. In *The Wake of Art: Criticism, Philosophy, and the Ends of Taste*. Routledge, Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 81–96; and Arthur C. DANTO, The Work of Art and the Historical Future. In *The Madonna of the Future. Essays in a Pluralistic Art World*. University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles, 2001, pp. 416–431.

¹⁵ Walter GRASSKAMP, *Hans Haacke*. Phaidon Press, London, 2004.

¹⁶ Susan HILLER, *After the Freud Museum*. Book Works, London, 2000.

¹⁷ See, among others: Rainer BORGMEISTER, Section des Figures: The Eagle from the Oligocene to the Present. In *October*, Vol. 42, 1987/Autumn, pp. 135–154; and Broodthaers: *Writings, Interviews, Photographs*. Ed. by Benjamin BUCHLOH, The MIT Press, Cambridge–Massachusetts, 1988.

¹⁸ *The Museum as Muse. Artists Reflect*. Ed. by Kynaston McSHINE. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1999.

The theoretical question, the aesthetic issue—of the marriage and the separation of modern and contemporary—is also interesting because its validity is backed by the very practice of contemporary art. The existence and practice of museums are defined by the historical concepts, interpretative frameworks which are used by the given period in connection with the history of art. And vice versa: it is the order created by museums—in Tony Bennett’s words, the exhibitionary complex—that allows these concepts to become comprehensible, incontestable experience or, if you like: a public institution. The museum—and in this respect there are several correspondences between the principles of natural, ethnographic and art museums—is a spectacle and an institution of authoritarian teaching. “Within the hierarchically organized system of looks of the penitentiary, in which each level of looking is monitored by a higher one, the inmate constitutes the point at which all these looks culminate but he is unable to return a look of his own or move to a higher level of vision. The exhibitionary complex, by contrast, perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power—a site of sight accessible to all.”¹⁹ The aesthetic inventory, the discussion of an artwork is a discourse on its presentation, the visual display. And the presentation in turn is the apparatus which is often rendered invisible, which brings fourth the space of interpretation of the canon. The reason why the sight, the order of artworks—translated into Bentham’s rhetoric—is such an important tool of the panoptic world view is that the pleasure of experiencing an artwork, the freedom of interpretation is also part of the canonising machinery. Art museums *translate* the theoretical canon²⁰ into the language of spatial narrative but the co-operation that seemed to be fruitful in the mid-19th century has

¹⁹ Tony BENNETT, The Exhibitionary Complex. In *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge, London–New York, 1995, p. 69.

²⁰ “That we walk through a museum, walk past the art, recapitulates in our act the motion of art history itself, its restlessness, its forward motion, its power to link.” Philip FISHER, *Making and Effacing Art. Modern American Art in a Culture of Museums*. Oxford University Press, New York–Oxford, 1991; and for Fisher’s interpretation, see: David CARRIER, *Museum Skeptics: A History of the Display of Art in Public Galleries*. Duke University Press, Durham–London, 2006.

by now become over-complicated, almost impossible, in the absence of such a canon.

The idea of the museum as a public and universal institution became dominant around the middle and in the second half of the 19th century—in Germain Bazin’s words, at the time of the “Museum Age.” “The nineteenth century saw the extension of the museum to encompass all the creations of human life, even the most humble; it professed to be a compendium of all knowledge like the *Speculum Majus*, the thirteenth-century encyclopaedic treatise by Vincent Beauvais. The resultant enlargement was violently attacked by certain thinkers who sought to limit the museum to its original purpose. In the nineteenth century, Germany more than France emerged as the theatre for this kind of academic discussion of the museum; toward 1830 controversy erupted between partisans of the intensive museum, limited to art, and champions of the extensible form, broadly scientific in scope.”²¹

Bazin then goes on to say that the theoretical debate was, of course, eventually settled through the practice of co-operation between the museums: the distinctions between the museum collections in London, Berlin, and finally New York, the power structures of aesthetic and historical arrangements. In the second half of the 19th century, the by now invisible controversies led the *first* museum age—seen from the perspective of the present—to establish the boundaries within which the various types of knowledge and collection were presented to the spectator as incontestable standards. The museum *building* and the visual display became interpretable in the modern urban spatial network intended to represent political order; their functions and their possibilities are closely connected to the current character of 19th-century spatial grids. The paradox observed by Danto, the interdependence of the theoretical and the architectural apparatus, was at any rate valid at the time when the 19th century *artistic* institution network emerged, and it

²¹ Germain BAZIN, Op. cit., p. 195. Archetypal museums relying on the dominance of an intensive, aesthetic experience include Schinkel’s Altes Museum, and the process of its internal reorganisation under Richard von Schöne. Cf. Steven MOYANO, Quality vs. History. Schinkel’s Altes Museum and Prussian Arts Policy. In *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 72. No. 4, 1990/December, pp. 585–608; and Suzanne MARCHAND, The Quarell of the Ancients and Moderns in the German Museums. In *Musems and Memory*. Ed. by Susan A. CRANE, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000, pp. 179–199.

still is today. The question of displaying contemporary art arose at the dawn of the museum age, at the time when the collections were compiled and the different areas were isolated—our study looks at this period as the *prehistory* of MoMA. A mythic example for the co-operation between contemporary and universal art collections was provided by the relationship between the Luxembourg Museum of Paris and the Louvre.²² The Luxembourg Museum was originally a royal museum, which displayed the works of old masters in 1750; the evolution of its collection took place in the shadow of the Louvre and it belongs to its prehistory to some extent. When the Louvre—as argued by Dominique Vivant Denon²³—became the place to guard universal art history, the question of displaying contemporary art had to be addressed. Finally, the Musée des Artistes Vivant opened to the public in the vacated Luxembourg Palace on April 24th 1818, as part of the political agenda of Bourbon restoration. “So, *modern* and *French* too the Musée du Luxembourg had to be: for the best glory of the Monarchy. Thus, the vocation of the Musée du Luxembourg commenced as twofold: it appeared as a symbol of modernity (the first museum in the world devoted only to living artists), and it was radically patriotic (only French art was represented).”²⁴ The royal palace exhibiting the works of living art was a “musée de passage,” that is, it did not have its own collection but functioned as a vestibule²⁵ to the paradise of the Louvre,

²² Andrew McCLELLAN, *Inventing the Louvre. Art, Politics and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge–New York, 1994; and J. Pedro LORENTE, *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity. The First Museums of Contemporary Art. 1800–1930*. Ashgate, Aldershot, 1998.

²³ Cecil GOULD, *Trophy of Conquest. The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre*. Faber and Faber, London, 1965.

²⁴ J. Pedro LORENTE, *Op. cit.*, pp. 58–59.

²⁵ “The Luxembourg was intended not to have permanent collections, since the works of deceased artists should leave the museum within a reasonable time. One of the Louvre’s statements ruled that no art-work could be admitted until ten years after the death of its maker, therefore that period of ten years was usually reported to be the limit for works by dead artists to be removed from the Luxembourg. Only major works would be sent to the sacred space of the Louvre, while the rest would be condemned to decorate the walls of a ministry, or to be transferred to a provincial museum (Cf. POMMIER, E., *Naissance des musées de province*. In *Les lieux de mémoire. La nation*. Ed. by NORA, P., Paris, 1986, pp. 451–495). In theory at least, nothing was kept permanently in the Luxembourg. Thus, the museum was perceived as a waiting-room for meritorious works (*ouvrages de mérite*) awaiting the ‘last judgment’ of time for their final ‘consecration’ or ‘damnation’: a purgatory-museum (*musée purgatoire*), as it was popularly called.” J. Pedro LORENTE, *Op. cit.*, p. 81.

which later inspired Alfred H. Barr in his vision of the partnership between MoMA and the Metropolitan. The co-operation between the Musée du Luxembourg and the Louvre is, therefore, certainly some kind of prehistory in the technical sense of the word, albeit the differences remain important. At the initial stage of the partnership between the French museums, the relationship of contemporary and modern was straightforward, thanks to their formal equivalence, but by the end of the period (in the late 19th century) the equivalence of Modern and “modern” was no longer self-explanatory. The separation of modern art from the domain of contemporary art constituted a radical change. The Salon des Refusés (1863), somewhat later the first impressionist exhibition (1874), and finally the Salon des Indépendants (1884) were indications of contemporary avant-garde, that is, modern artworks being excluded from the Musée du Luxembourg. As for the “musée du passage,” the practice of a museum with no permanent collection, the French experience, was an inspirational, mythic precedent for Barr and for the founders of MoMA; even if their personal experience was confined to the German museums of the twenties: the Nationalgalerie in Berlin and the Provinzialmuseum in Hanover also have their roles in the prehistory of MoMA. The Nationalgalerie built in the style of a church from the late classic period was opened on March 21st, 1876, the Emperor’s birthday, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Altes Museum on Museumsinsel, offering a narrative of the definition of national collection which evokes countless associations.²⁶ The second director of the museum was Hugo von Tschudi—strongly backed by Wilhelm von Bode—who interpreted German collection as a contemporary world collection in Germany and used public money to buy and exhibit pictures by—*horribile dictu!*—Manet, Monet, Degas and Cézanne as well as sculptures by Rodin. A scandal²⁷ ensued, Tschudi²⁸ left for the Pinakothek in Munich

²⁶ *Die Alte National Galerie*, Ed. by Peter-Klaus SCHUSTER. Du Mont, Cologne–Berlin, 2003.

²⁷ Peter PARET, The Tschudi Affair. In Peter PARET: *German Encounters with Modernism, 1840–1945*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge–London, 2001, pp. 92–119.

²⁸ Tschudi was an important exemplar and model for Barr as well, as is apparent from his paper from 1941: Alfred H. Barr Jr., Modern art makes history, too: “Wasn’t it von Tschudi who said, whispering behind his hand: ‘Do you know why we admire El Greco so much? It’s because he makes us think of Cezanne!’ That was forty years or so ago when interest in either artist was considered radical.” In *College Art Journal*, Vol. 1. No. 1, 1941/Nov., p. 5.

and his successor, Ludwig Justi continued the collection and exhibition of *modern* contemporary pictures but in another building of the Nationalgalerie, the Kronprinzen Palais. We must probably agree with Peter-Klaus Schuster's conjecture that the Kronprinzen Palais, with its Contemporary Museum, was also a decisive influence for Barr, who visited Berlin in 1920, in founding MoMA.²⁹ The Hanover museum under the directorship of Alexander Dörner also made a strong impression on Barr. The exceptionally young director supported El Lissitzky in creating the Abstract Cabinet.³⁰

Returning to the New York scene: MoMA owes a great deal to the now invisible debates once carried on over the urban context, the creation of the museum and the delimitation of the collections. These debates only ever had temporary consequences for exhibition practice but rarely failed to have some consequence. The different collections of the Metropolitan, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the American Museum of Natural History in New York, the Washington National Gallery and the Smithsonian museums were assembled in the security of confidence, which is described by Danto as follows: "The first generation of great American museums took it for granted that its contents would be treasures of great visual beauty and that visitors would enter the tresorium to be in the presence of spiritual truth of which the visually beautiful was the metaphor."³¹

The second generation of museums, Danto goes on, relied on the arguments from the certainty of the aesthetic formalism and linear narrativity—known in the history of aesthetics and art from the works of Harold Rosenberg and Clement Greenberg. Alfred H. Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, adhered to it as well. Besides MoMA, the second generation includes the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum and the by now vaguely remembered Museum of Living Art, which was established by

²⁹ "The 1929 'Museum of Modern Art' in New York, co-founded by Barr, is unthinkable without his experiences in Berlin in the 1920s and without his admiration for the Justis Kronprinz Palace as an exemplary 'museum of the future.'" SCHUSTER, *Die Alte National Galerie*, p. 28.

³⁰ On Dörner, who attempted to co-operate with National Socialists after 1933 and finally emigrated to the United States in 1937, where, with the help of Panofsky and Barr among others, he worked for a short period as the director of the Rhode Island School of Design, see: Ines KATENHAUSEN's manuscript: *Alexander Dörner (1893–1957) a German Art Historian in the United States*.

³¹ Arthur C. DANTO, *Modern, Postmodern, Contemporary*, p. 16.

A. E. Gallatin³² in 1927 and closed down in 1943. The stories of these museums were closely related to each other and were the source of a lot of tension for the Metropolitan Museum of Art—independently of the oft cited mythic precedents—, since their collections entered the cultural space which had already been defined by the encyclopaedic museum of the first generation: they could enter places that had not yet been occupied. The different co-operation options to be discussed below were born in this context, as dictated by the progress of the debates over the special collections created by the second wave versus the encyclopaedism and conservatism of the Metropolitan.

The abstract art historical and pragmatic museological facets of the concept of *modern*, the familiar dichotomy of the two art histories, the remoteness and interdependence of the two discourses clearly surface in the history of MoMA as well. The museum founder party of highly accomplished and wealthy modern New York philanthropists with a genuine commitment to society³³ and the art historians they invited, Paul J. Sachs and Alfred H. Barr Jr.,³⁴ who was only twenty-seven years old in 1929, were equally convinced that their age accommodated a modern, globally forward-looking and progressive spirit, which was very important for the United States but which American museums had thus far neglected to represent. The International Exhibition of Modern Art, or the Armory Show, of 1913 put the issue of developing an institution network of contemporary art on the agenda.³⁵

³² Gall STAVITSKY, A. E. Gallatin's Gallery and Museum of Living Art. (1927–1943) In *American Art*, Vol. 7. No. 2, 1993/Spring, pp. 46–63.

³³ Abby Aldrich Rockefeller (1874–1948), Lillie P. Bliss, (1864–1951), Mary Quinn Sullivan, (1877–1939): an analysis of the diverse activities of the founding *women* is outside the scope of this study. They each had their autonomous life histories and decisions and it is only with a certain degree of maliciousness that we could characterize the creation of MoMA as the “ladies program.” It is a fact, however, that the practical running of the museum was in the hands of men for several decades. They enlisted the railroad owner, investory, art collector Anson Conger Goodyear (1877–1965) who became the first president of the museum. (Abby Aldrich, John D. Rockefeller's wife, was born into a patrician family in Rhode Island. She wrote and read in four languages, studied art history, dance and the ancient world. Lillie P. Bliss was the child of a rich Republican family from Boston who moved to New York and established a notable collection, spending her life as a patron of the arts. Mary Quinn Sullivan was an amateur artist, psychotherapist and collector.) Cf. Annie COHEN-SOLAL, *Painting American: The Rise of American Artists, Paris 1867- New York 1948*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2001.

³⁴ Cf. Sybil Gordon KANTOR, *Alfred H. Barr, Jr. and the Intellectual Origins of the Museum of Modern Art*. The MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2002.

³⁵ Frank Anderson TRAPP, The 1923 Armory Show in Retrospect. In *College Art Journal*, Vol. 17, No. 3.1958/Spring, pp. 294–296.

When Abby Rockefeller and Anson Conger Goodyear and, at their invitation, Alfred H. Barr started organising the museum, they did not only have concepts familiar to the cultural elite but also concrete collections to work with. The launch therefore—similarly to those in 1818 in Paris, in 1853 in Munich (of the Neue Pinakothek) and in 1876 in Berlin—proceeded in line with the political interests of the time. In the case of the Musée du Luxembourg, the conservative Bourbon restoration sought to gain legitimacy by being associated with contemporary art. In Bavaria, the procurement of a leading position in shaping a Francophobe but not Prussian–German cultural identity was the target: the contemporary 19th-century collection in the neighbourhood of the Glyptothek and Alte Pinakothek proclaimed Bavarian cultural superiority. In Wilhelm’s Germany it was evident to the Emperor that the control over and recognition of contemporary art could play a major role in shaping modern German nationalist public identity. In the America of the twenties MoMA was used to spread the model of the modern, industrial, urbanized world, the transnational civilisation, and to legitimise superiority: philanthropic intentions and the political and economic interests of the elite converged perfectly.

The museum, with its fate tied to the meaning of the concept of *modern* in 1920s politics, was therefore created following the emergence of a number of establishments born under different circumstances but operating with similar principles. The role its forerunners played in art and museum history was determined by the art political interests of French and German nationalism, and the story of MoMA also becomes interpretable in the context of the political history of the United States. MoMA could come into being because the belief in universal modernity in the twenties coincided with a progressive American thinking intent on fulfilling a global role. This belief, which rests on linear progress, is amply documented: there are texts and illustrations, as well as exhibitions elucidating the profoundness and consensual nature of this conviction.

The founders of MoMA saw a familiarity with and an understanding of modern art as the key issue. American museums generally tend to have a more direct and pragmatic attitude to pedagogy than their European counterparts; in the specific case of MoMA, even the founding documents themselves envisage a distinctly pedagogical institution in the service of the people of New York, and the inter-

pretation of the museum as a laboratory had precisely this meaning for Barr. That is, the emancipation of the library, research and works that had not been recognized as museum pieces before to the status of art and the task of their collection were of equal import. Although Barr's radical multimedia museum designs were somewhat tamed by the founders,³⁶ the discovery of contemporary art on a par with modern nevertheless had an aspect of *novelty*, which continues to have an invaluable significance in present day United States.

In 1929 the museum founders saw the new beginning, the *tabula rasa* as the establishment of a cultural canon rather than as the elimination or modification of one. The idea that the new paradisiacal beginning came with the sacrifice of suppressing, literary ruining a cultural heritage was not raised until decades later. When the founders of MoMA turned their gaze to unknown worlds in their aspiration to transform the present—and chose not to concern themselves with the various legacies of the past—they did so in the name of a sense of commitment which was related to the acceptance of the global political role determining American identity. It was not the Armory Show alone that led to the creation of MoMA but—I believe—political education also played a role of at least the same weight. There is a good reason why Nelson Rockefeller, who was later elected governor, saw his activities in MoMA as part of his political career, in so far as he acquired certain skills within the walls of the museum. The MoMA tradition treated modern art as a formal and universal language which allowed groups with the most diverse cultural backgrounds to find their way in society. It thus helped ful-

³⁶ The brochure of 1929 introducing the museum says: "In time the Museum will expand beyond the limits of painting and sculpture in order to include departments devoted to drawings, prints and other phases of modern art. In addition to the Museum's permanent collections, space will be set aside for great and, it is hoped, constantly recurring loan exhibitions, both national and international." *Art in Our Time. A Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art*. Ed. by Harriet S. BEE-Michelle ELLIGOTT, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2004, p. 29.

Barr's original version differs to a substantial extent: "In time the Museum would probably expand beyond the narrow limits of painting and sculpture in order to include departments devoted to drawings, prints, and photography, typography, the arts of design in commerce and industry, architecture (a collection of *projects* and *maquettes*), stage designing, furniture and the decorative arts. Not the least important collection might be the filmoteke, a library of films." Alfred H. BARR Jr., *Chronicle of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture*. In *Paintings and Sculpture in the Museum of Modern Art, 1929-1967*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1977, p. 620.

fill the role that was part of contemporary American political culture aspiring to take possession of the dimensions necessary for exercising global power. The experience of modern art—no matter how formal a character was assigned to it—did not only mean that the section of society outside the cultural scene could be better understood and ruled through art but also implied that art had a crucial role in governing society. Modern art appeared to be a suitable tool in realizing the great American political dream of the “melting pot.” No knowledge of languages or national or local traditions was needed to understand modern *visual* art. The experience and promise of global synchronicity served as a pass to the world of the universal aesthetics of modern art. All that together was enough to promote the vision of MoMA from being the private cause of a few philanthropists to becoming an eminent political priority for the modern American elite breaking out of isolationism. Barr’s curious, apolitical formalism is closely related to the idea of the melting pot encouraged by a technological utopia—Barr was therefore uninterested in the left or right-wing context of modern art, as he was in the social function that the art he preferred incidentally fulfilled. Barr’s journal of his travels in Russia is a clear illustration of this attitude of overlooking political reality.³⁷

This is why the duality that characterizes the relationship between contemporary art and contemporary politics and unwinds its red yarn along the history of the museum is so interesting—and often in need of an explanation. MoMA, as dictated by the philosophy behind it, has always seen contemporary art as a formal question and—with a few isolated exceptions—has never reflected on its political contexts. The museum itself at the same time assumes a genuinely active role in shaping contemporary American cultural and image policy. Those who enter MoMA today will encounter the formal relation network and narrative of modern art interpreted with exceptional directness and coherence reminiscent of Clement Greenberg’s methods of art interpretation in a number of respects.

This formal approach, which disregards social conflicts and classes, drew heated criticism from left-wing intellectuals in 1930s New York, as demonstrated by reactions to *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* organized in 1932 as part of Philip Johnson’s activities as curator. The title has clear political references: in opposition

³⁷ Alfred H. BARR, *Russian Diary, 1927–1928*. In *October*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1978/Winter, pp. 10–51.

to the functionalism preferred by the Left, Barr sought a formula that suited the purposes of the theory as well as those of museum construction and collection building. Barr saw the International Style as similar to Gothicism in its significance and in the process of its propagation: he bowed to its profoundness and inevitability but declined to make way for leftist rhetoric or Marxist criticism. The *style* gave rise to aesthetic standards; it had to satisfy the requirements of novelty, that is, find a balance between the extreme right-wing Philip Johnson and the formal radicalism and socio-political blindness of the neutral Barr. In contrast to the all-encompassing critical approach of functionalism, Barr spoke exclusively of *style*; the architecture of the International Style had to be the contemporary American architecture that had reshaped New York. Barr does not believe that society has a role in spatial design: "The distinguishing aesthetic principles of the International Style as laid down by the authors are three: emphasis upon volume—space enclosed by thin planes or surfaces as opposed to the suggestion of mass and solidity; regularity as opposed to symmetry or other kinds of obvious balance; and lastly, dependence upon the intrinsic elegance of materials, technical perfection, and fine proportions, as opposed to applied ornament."³⁸

Although the International Style was the framework to establish global norms, the aesthetics of spatial design, we should not forget about the immediate architectural environment in which MoMA's visitors lived in the late twenties.

The standpoints of political neutrality and aesthetic radicalism were even more difficult to maintain in contemporary architecture than in the fine arts. Meyer Schapiro, Marxist philosopher and art historian, responded to the exhibition by publishing a radical critique in *The New Masses*, where he brought up precisely those basic problems of modern architecture which Johnson and Barr had evaded and the architects Wright and Mumford had tried to solve through organic development. "The buildings are more than designs or spectacles; they are a social program and a necessary part of a new society. The intentions of the most advanced architects imply a social revolution, even when the architects themselves are conservative or ignorant of basic facts. In claiming the social relevance of building, in affirming in projects and books the public responsibilities of the architect and

³⁸ Sybil Gordon KANTOR, *Op. cit.*, p. 296.

the need for communal enterprise, these bolder architects anticipate the style of a Socialist Republic. [...] We can understand why its enemies have called the new architecture the “Trojan horse of Bolshevism” and why it is the favoured art of Soviet planners.”³⁹

Schapiro’s pointed stance accompanies the entire story of the Bauhaus and the new architecture. If modern architecture, that is, the International Style rejects the Neo-Classicist monumentalism of the 19th century represented in contemporary American architecture by Russell Pope for instance, and creates non-hierarchical, pure spatial relations, does that not logically imply at least a radical reform, if not quite a revolution...? Barr’s and MoMA’s great question can be perfectly reconstructed from the architectural debates as well as from the problem of the museum building itself: how could a stylistic revolution take place without social consequences of precisely the kind for which style had shown the way out? Barr’s answer partly lies in universal formalism, that is, the suppression of social norms and contexts. This was one reason why the Marxist Schapiro argued against the formalism that eschewed contexts, this time in connection with contemporary art in general, beyond the domain of architecture.⁴⁰ For MoMA, both Bauhaus and contemporary Soviet fine art constituted part of a visual and genre revolution and Barr, similarly to the other founders of MoMA, was completely untouched by the radical political context in which those artworks were born. For Barr, the great

³⁹ John KWAIT (Meyer Schapiro), *The New Architecture*. In *The New Masses*, 1932, No. 23, Republished: John KWAIT, *Looking Forward to Looking Backward. A Dossier of Writings on Architecture from the 1930s*. Ed. by Felicity D. SCOTT. In *Grey Room*. Vol. 22, No. 6, 2002/Winter, pp. 66–109, quote from p. 67. R. Sherman replied to Schapiro’s essay in Mumford’s paper, the *Shelter*, but Schapiro’s reply was rejected by Mumford. The “Architecture under Capitalism” was finally also published in *The New Masses*, in December 1932. For Schapiro’s role and his debate with Mumford, see: Felicity D. SCOTT, *On Architecture under Capitalism*. In *Grey Room*, Vol. 22, No. 6, 2002/Winter, pp. 44–65. On communist cultural views in New York and the role of *The New Masses*, see: Paul R. GORMAN, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth Century America*. The University of North Carolina Press, London, 1996. We should make mention here of the debate that took place between Schapiro, regarded as the representative of the Old Left, and the Art Workers’ Coalition of the New Left following the transfer of *Guernica* from MoMA after My Lai. Schapiro—to the disbelief of the New Left—did not support the initiative which was aimed at putting pressure both on Picasso and MoMA. Cf. Francis FRASCINA, *Meyer Schapiro’s Choice: My Lai, Guernica, MoMA and the Art Left, 1969–1970*. In *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 20, No. 1–2, 1995, pp. 481–511 and 705–728.

⁴⁰ Andrew HEMINGWAY, *Meyer Schapiro and Marxism in the 1930s*. In *Oxford Art Journal*. Vol. 17, No. 1, 1994, pp. 13–29; and David CRAVEN, *Meyer Schapiro, Karl Korsch, and the Emergence of Critical Theory*. In *Oxford Art Journal*. Vol. 17, No. 1, 1994, pp. 42–54.

works of modern art, especially the documents of abstract art, offered the promise of eliminating both class and national considerations. The political intention of the approach that avoided political frameworks of interpretation was again and again: the identification of progress and the contemporary American social model. Iconographic interpretation, the reconstruction of the contexts of cultural history—the turning points of art and cultural history in the twenties—surfaced as genealogies of social history, that is, awkwardly realistic chance occurrences, rather than formal histories of style. And MoMA, with a prominent history of amnesia, embraced the issues of the art of the time, excluding political reality as far as possible.

The International Style therefore suited the standards and views of American behaviourism. The artworks that satisfied the principles of formal, visual uniformity appeared to be organisable according to the same logic. The formal approach remains the most characteristic tradition of MoMA, notwithstanding its relativism and transfigurations, which renders the objective of visual revolutions invisible. MoMA put individual works of art in an inexorable order of development, as demonstrated by the progress chart of the path leading to Surrealism, which is equal in significance to the “Torpedo Diagram” (to be discussed below). This, perhaps peculiar, indifference is the reason why Barr took home nothing but what he needed from Europe: the “white cube” approach (which was dubbed the clinic by Bazin⁴¹ specifically in connection with MoMA as well). The duality of political neutrality and evident American commitment provides an explanation for Barr’s indifference towards Philip Johnson’s political career. Barr was concerned with Johnson’s work in spatial design and its consequences for the practice of museum exhibition, and with Johnson’s views on the first design competition for the MoMA building. The fact that Johnson used the International Style to express Nazi sympathies had no other repercussions than the loss of his employment after 1934 with consideration to his promising political career. But he was never publicly convicted. Johnson returned to MoMA after 1945 and played a decisive role in the perpetual reconstruction of the building.⁴² It is clearly not a coincidence that Johnson

⁴¹ Germain BAZIN, *Op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁴² Cf. Kazyn VARNELIS, “We Cannot Not Know History.” Philip Johnson’s Political and Cynical Survival. In *Journal of Architectural Education*. Vol. 49 No. 2. 1995/Nov, pp. 92–104. Neither

saw Mies van de Rohe as a model,⁴³ whose indifference towards Nazism—and hopes to the effect that the reactionary modern group would let him work—is plainly evidenced by the simple fact that he remained in Germany until 1938; and his partner Lilly Reich,⁴⁴ the exhibition designer who was fairly important for MoMA—both Barr and Johnson were influenced by her—stayed in her country all the time. Barr's political views—if he had any—remained in the background; the artworks he selected, the isms he arranged in order with their—in his view—incontestable narratives lost their original political contexts and meanings in MoMA's space and served as examples in this chart. The political utopia hiding behind the formal aesthetics, the behaviourism of the international style is implied by the culture political practice which has drawn so much and such radical criticism in the history of MoMA. The relations and parallels⁴⁵ between MoMA and the CIA can be traced back to the fact that MoMA “silenced” the utopian political mission of contemporary art and ushered it into the canon of the global museum satisfying the cultural logic of Pax Americana. In this respect MoMA followed radically different traditions from first generation museums. This formal decontextualisation later lead to MoMA's two great art historical innovations: one of these concerns the museum building and spatial design and the other relates to display principles. Universal formalism laid the foundations of the “white cube,” with MoMA becoming its archetype.

This context provides a suitable background for the interpretation of the legendary “Torpedo Diagram,” which was created in 1933 as part

the editor nor the authors of the volume published by the museum in 1998 on Johnson's admittedly diversely influential work extending over different periods make any mention or appear to be aware of the causes of Johnson's absence from the museum between 1934 and 1945–47. *The Museum of Modern Art: Philip Johnson and the Museum of Modern Art. Studies in Modern Art*, No. 6. Ed. by John ELDERFIELD, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1998.

⁴³ Terence RILEY–Barry BERGDOLL, *Mies in Berlin. The Museum of Modern Art*. Harry N. Abrams, New York, 2001.

⁴⁴ Mathilda McQUAID, *Lilly Reich, Designer and Architect*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1996.

⁴⁵ The relations and parallels between MoMA and the CIA with its intensive culture political activities during the cold war were first highlighted by Eva Cockcroft in 1974. Cf. Eva COCKCROFT, Abstract Expressionism. Weapon of the Cold War. In *Artforum*, Vol. 12. 1974/June, pp. 39–41. A similar view is expressed by Frances Stonor SAUNDERS, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. Granta Books, London, 1999. A substantially more refined picture is outlined in: David CAUTE, *The Dancer Defects. The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*. Oxford University Press, Oxford–New York, 2003.

of the debates over the permanent collection of the museum and reviewed the hundred years from 1850 to 1950, that is, the period from the birth of modern art up to the future still visible and manageable in the timescale of the museum, from the perspective of the connections between various schools and isms. “The ambition was to attain a ‘permanent collection’ with a fixed scope but changing contents. Its character was spelled out in a prospectus drawn up (presumably, largely by Alfred Barr) in April 1931, in anticipation of a massive fundraising drive. As an answer to the fundamental question “What is Meant by ‘Modern Art’?” this publication stated: “‘Modern Art’, as referred to in this statement, is a relative, elastic term that serves conveniently to designate *painting, sculpture, architecture, and the lesser visual arts, original and progressive* in character, produced especially within the last three decades but including also ‘pioneer ancestors’ of the 19th century.”⁴⁶

The creation and continual development of the collection was permeated by the logic of continual progress. The “Torpedo Diagram” also evidences the depth and force of the consensus of the belief in universal modernity, which drove MoMA’s founders at the end of the first third of the last century. The harmony of contemporary and modern appeared to be unshakable and the future of the museum lay with this sacred alliance, this Entente. So much so, that—as was pointed out by Kirk Varnedoe, the curator of MoMA, in his essay—Barr drew two more diagrams in 1933, which interpreted the relationship between the planned modern collection and the Metropolitan as well as other museums in New York.⁴⁷ According to Barr’s diagrams the collection domain of the Metropolitan ended sometime between 1875 and 1900 in line with the Luxembourg-Louvre shift, and from then on, MoMA and to some extent the Whitney Museum of American Art were supposed to take over the task of collection; that is, the second generation museum was always closer to the future of its time. Finally in 1947⁴⁸ the curators of the Whitney, MoMA and

⁴⁶ Kirk VARNEDOE, *The Evolving Torpedo. Changing Ideas of the Collection of Painting and Sculpture of the Museum of Modern Art*. In *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century. Continuity and Change. Studies in Modern Art*, No. 5. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1995, pp. 15–16.

⁴⁷ Kirk VARNEDOE, *The Evolving Torpedo*. p., 20.

⁴⁸ In addition to Varnedoe’s essay above, see: *The Inter-Museum Agreement among the Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art and Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1947*, in *Art in Our Time. A Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art*. Ed. by Harriet S. BEE and Michelle ELLIGOTT. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2004, p. 90.

the Metropolitan came to an agreement that they were to share the bounds of collection between them in accordance with the above principles. Under the terms of the agreement that emerged after lengthy and complicated bargaining, MoMA was to donate or sell several artworks older than fifty years to the Metropolitan to allow its uninterrupted renewal and development in line with the principles of the “musée du passage.” Goodyear, president of MoMA’s board of trustees, compared the permanence of the collection to that of a river, every bit of which changes and yet its permanence is unquestionable. The river metaphor, similarly to the “Torpedo Diagram” rests on the security of the direction of flow. The agreement of 1947 was intended as permanent but later proved to be exceptional and momentary. At the time of the political cold war, modern and contemporary museums soon found themselves—as important institutions of the ideological tools of Pax Americana—in the frontline of cultural battles and this situation altered their relationship to each other and to the boundaries of collections. The representatives of the Metropolitan found the elitism and exclusivity of the art concept of modern-contemporary embraced by MoMA and the Whitney somewhat farfetched on the one hand, and on the other hand, they were of the opinion that the Metropolitan should take its share of representing the political message of American museums, the principle of artistic freedom, in the race against the Soviet Union, and this would be difficult to achieve without exhibiting the works of contemporary artists.

The two museums, the Whitney and MoMA thus changed strategies: the latter established the novel notion of permanent collection and Barr—in agreement with his successor, René d’Harnoncourt—developed the ideology of the permanent exhibition of modern master works by 1953.⁴⁹ Departing to some extent from the dramatic history of the artistic and museum world of New York as reconstructed by Varnedoe, the original collection concept of MoMA and Barr’s “Torpedo Diagram” suggests that the founders of the museum were well aware of the nature of their enterprise: they placed their trust in a continually changing and deliberately changed long-term future, which was *almost experienceable in the social present*. Also, they firmly believed that they would rule this future through the tools of

⁴⁹ Alfred H. BARR, Jr., An Important Change in Policy. In *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*. Vol. 20. No. 3–4. 1953/Summer, p. 3.

modernity. In the first decades of its existence MoMA was not alone in placing its trust in modernity or in tightly associating the future of modernity with the cultural role of the United States and New York arising from their global political power. The universalism of the New York School rested on the economic, political and cultural superiority of the East-Coast metropolis: everything that prompted Serge Guilbaut to state that the city had stolen the idea of modern art from Paris.⁵⁰

The political and social history of MoMA, the metamorphosis perceptible throughout the past decade, which finally became manifest with its reconstruction in 2004, is evidence for and an illustration of the duality of the art theoretical communion and separation observed by Danto. (Let us not forget that Danto's theoretical work is to a large extent inseparable from the fortunes of the museum with its key role in the art world of New York.) There are some rather dramatic elements in Barr's "Torpedo Diagram." It is not only its genealogy—with its uncompromisingly scientific representation of the history of modern art and the succession of avant-garde isms,—the interconnection networks portrayed with every intention of objectivity, that is, its methods of classification which is striking but also its constant references to the future. The foreseeable future ends in 1950 in Barr's diagram but its true singularity lies in its naive confidence in the invariable existence of fifty year periods. (I have a sneaking suspicion that the global cultural context of the "Torpedo Diagram" is provided by the chronological order of the three and five-year economic plans followed by the Soviet Union.) The torpedo of modern art advanced along a cultural time dimension which was replete with virtual but in a political sense decidedly real limits, an endless row of dates, the advent of which brought the fulfilment of some utopian promise—in principle, that is. Barr envisaged the future of modern art as having a place among competing political universes.

The coherence of the modern art collection was guaranteed by the always ongoing two-way adjustment between the experiences of modern and contemporary; the spatial narrativity of the museum exposes and familiarizes the theoretical linear narrative outlined in the history of art. The cultural fronts of the cold war offered no vision

⁵⁰ Serge GUILBAUT, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art. Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*. Chicago University Press, Chicago–London, 1983.

of the future which was not dominated by universal modernity, the teaching of infinite progress; a contemporary art structure that used a parlance other than that of this world was therefore inconceivable. Even though—as we are now aware—it is a palpable tendency of contemporary art to take a radical stance against the cultural oppression of Neo-Colonialism⁵¹ in accordance with the thesis of (to use Brian Larkin's phrase) parallel modernities.⁵²

The process of redefining MoMA's mission—the inevitable reassessment of its own role, self-reflection, the creation of critical spaces, the relativisation of the spatial narrative of the museum, the dismantling of the labyrinth of the succession of rooms arranged by Barr and especially by William Rubin,⁵³ the strategy of predetermined visiting routes defined by the spatial narrativity, the re-organisation of the collection display—began with the disappearance of the theoretical construction in which the narrative represented by the emerging master works proved to fit into the paradigm of universal Modernism, that is, where the hard earned elements of the art philosophical Mendeleev system were substitutable for individual works. In the case of MoMA, it was the musealisation of the concept of modern art that put and “end” to the self-evidence of universal aesthetics; a further blow was when after 1968 the museum itself came into political conflict with contemporary art.

All that did not happen overnight, of course. René d'Harnoncourt, who succeeded Barr in 1949, put an emphasis on the independence of “timeless modernity” from chronological aspects; the museum attempted to ahistoricize the concept of modern. At the time of the cold war, the museum showed an increasing tendency to demonstrate

⁵¹ Cf. *Democracy Unrealized. Documenta 11—Platform 1*. Ed. by Okwui ENWEZOR, et. al., Hatje Cantz, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2002.

⁵² Brian LARKIN, *Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers. Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities*. In *The Anthropology of Globalization*. Ed. by Jonathan Xavier INDA and Renaldo ROSALDO. Blackwell Publishing, Malden (Massachusetts), 2002, pp. 350–378.

⁵³ William S. Rubin worked for the museum as a curator from 1967, he was the director of the departments of painting and sculpture between 1973 and 1988. He died in New York in 2006 at the age of 78. On Rubin's studious implementation of the methods developed by Barr see: “At MoMA the rooms that contain the permanent collection are linked to each other as in a chain, so that the visitor must follow a prescribed route.” In: Carol DUNCAN—Alan WALLACH, *The Museum of Modern Art as Late Capitalist Ritual. An Iconographic Analysis*. In *Grasping the World. The Idea of the Museum*. Ed. by Donald PREZIOSI and Claire FARAGO. Ashgate, Aldershot, 2004, p. 488. We shall return to the work of Barr and Rubin in the chapter “White Cube” below.

the global necessity of the contemporary American world view—in the name of the mythos of universal modern art. D'Harnoncourt organized the exhibition entitled *Timeless Aspects of Modern Art* in 1948–49 in the context of the anthropological interpretation of modernness. “Modern art is not an isolated phenomenon in history but is, like the art of any period, an integral part of the art of all ages. The exhibition also serves as reminder that such ‘modern’ means of expression as exaggeration, distortion, abstraction, etc., have been used by artists since the very beginning of civilisation to give form to their ideas.”⁵⁴ Over the years that followed, MoMA—as Staniszevski brilliantly showed in her monograph *Power of Display*—effected a real turn in the area of visual display. The presentation technique developed here can be described as revolutionary with little risk of exaggeration—regardless of its message. D'Harnoncourt introduced a regime of visual display which was radically different from Barr's work running in parallel: the closed universes of the aesthetic autonomy of individual modern classic artworks were more and more frequently displaced by illustrations of direct political principles and ideas, which gained legitimacy in MoMA. In 1949, in parallel with the appearance of the idea of timeless modernness, d'Harnoncourt and Robert Goldwater—the author of *Primitivism in Modern Art* (the book was first published in 1938 and was a major influential force for generations)—, organized the exhibition *Modern Art in Your Life*, where architecture, design, advertisements and the creations of High Art appeared side by side. Motivated by the desire to put its political message across, MoMA showed a growing tendency to use methods of visual design which were unusually populist in a museum context and had connotations with everyday interconnection structures rejected by Barr. One example is the photo exhibition *Road to Victory* of 1942 organized by photographer and painter Edward Steichen and displayed in an installation by Herbert Bayer, who had started his career as a teacher at the Bauhaus and was now living in New York; the exhibition *Airways to Peace* was also designed by Bayer in 1943. Steichen organized the legendary photo exhibition *Family of Man* in 1955—now displayed in Luxemburg, the country of his birth—which represented the universality and unity of the

⁵⁴ Cf. Mary Anne STANISZEWSKI, *The Power of Display. A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. The MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts)–London, 1998, p. 84.

human race on the one hand, and the paterfamilias role of Western civilisation or, more precisely, of the United States on the other: it brought the connection between the abstract principles of progress of universal modern art and the conception of the “West” as the creator of and pretender to the throne of global power into the lime-light. Authors who subjected the relationship between MoMA and cold war politics to scrutiny—such as Serge Guilbaut, Francis Frascina⁵⁵ and, sympathizing with MoMA, Michael Kimmelman⁵⁶—describe the process that led to the situation where the universal standards of “modern art” which had been unconditionally accepted in the fifties, often came into conflict with the reality of contemporary art after 1968, especially in the representational machinery of MoMA. It was not the aesthetic value of individual pieces in MoMA’s collection that was put up for revision; the institution as a whole turned into the “Kremlin of Modernism”—to use Kirk Varnedoe’s phrase—and this did not bring much good with it. At the second stage of the cold war, at the time of the Vietnam War, the parallel between New York and universal modernness—the self-evident fact of the early fifties—no longer held. And as the notion of universal modernity became more and more identified with the global political power of America, leftist groups of the West, the Neo-Marxists, began to see MoMA as belonging to the imaginary other side. The new Left regarded the “Kremlin of Modernism” as an oppressive and closed stronghold of power rather than a beckoning shelter.

Thus, when after 1968 American artists—members of the Artist Worker Coalition (AWC) and the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG)—turned against the governments in power, and the Vietnam War, they suddenly found themselves in opposition to MoMA as well. “Fulfilling its role as a paradigm of modern art institutions, the Museum of Modern Art became a target—and a stage—for the political agitations of artists as they voiced dissent against war,

⁵⁵ Francis FRASCINA, *Modernism in Dispute. Art since the Forties*. Yale University Press, New Haven–London, 1993; Francis FRASCINA, *Pollock and After. A Critical Debate*. Routledge, London, 2001; and Francis FRASCINA, *Revision, Revisionism and Rehabilitation, 1959–1999. The American Century, Modern Starts and Cultural Memory*. In *Journal of Contemporary History*. Vol. 39, No. 1. 2004, pp. 93–116.

⁵⁶ Michael KIMMELMAN, *Revisiting the Revisionists. The Modern, its Critics, and the Cold War*. In *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad*. Studies in Modern Art No. 4. Ed. by John ELDERFIELD. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1994, pp. 38–56.

racism, and sexism, as well as other socially sanctioned conventions such as the political dimensions and institutional limits of the modern art museum” writes Mary Anne Staniszewski.⁵⁷ This train of thought emphasises attack and criticism as well as the idea of the museum becoming a stage. In 1969 various groups and impromptu formations turned to MoMA with a range of art political demands and radical artworks; the museum area was regularly used for demonstrations. The AWC handed the museum lists of museum representation conceptions and financial demands by the artists or relentlessly distributed these within the area of the museum. The group protested against the marginalisation of women, African American and Puerto Rican artists. In a spectacular action that took place in the museum foyer in November, GAAG issued uncompromising political demands: “A Call for the Immediate Resignation of all the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum.” Their petition to expel the museum founder Rockefellers was connected to their behaviour in the Vietnam War.

It is interesting to note that the *official* publication of MoMA, the *Chronicle of the Museum of Modern Art* makes no mention of the activities of either GAAG or the AWC in the relevant year. The annals record only a single innocent, albeit embarrassing, incident: in August 1969, Yayoi Kusama and her associates organised an unannounced happening in the sculpture garden of the museum with the title *Grand Orgy to Awaken the Dead at MoMA*, where security guards had to escort the naked participants out under the attentive eyes of visitors. The nudity scandal nevertheless caused less tension than the performance of GAAG, for instance; in 1969 GAAG organised actions involving iconic artworks, including *Guernica*. Malevich’s painting *White on White* was removed from the wall in the presence of photographers Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche and a manifesto stressing the social responsibility of the museum was hung in its place. Also in 1969, Life magazine published Ronald Haeberle’s photograph of the My Lai massacre, one of the scandals of the Vietnam War. The picture showing a pile of babies and children shot dead was turned into a poster by AWC workers Fraser Dougherty, Irving Petlin and Jon Hendricks. The poster created in the style of concept and protest art presented two sentences: “Q: And Babies? A: End

⁵⁷ Mary Anne STANISZEWSKI, *Op. cit.*, p. 263.

Babies.” In a pop media action in 1970, the above artists and members of GAAG and the AWC displayed their posters in front of *Guernica*, an especially significant piece in MoMA, which was deposited in the museum for safekeeping for the duration of the Franco regime. Studio International⁵⁸ was the only magazine that put the photograph of the action on its front cover at the artists’ request. The action now has a historical perspective of the power relations between MoMA and contemporary neo-avant-garde, alternative art and of the aesthetic lessons contained in them. *Guernica* is one of the major masterpieces of the communist Picasso—a painter of Stalin’s portrait—the universal icon of 20th-century modern art; it is at the same time a timeless document to anti-fascist resistance. The traditional capital of the Basque Country was bombed in 1937 by the Nazi Condor Legion supporting Franco’s army, during the civil war. *Guernica* was the first of a series of towns ruined in air raids; the destruction of the town is also symbolic of the atrocities of modern barbarity. Picasso’s artwork can also be regarded as a catalogue of the late modern tool stock: almost every formal innovation can be found here, in a perfectly lucid context of political agitation. The masterpiece exploiting and rewriting figurativeness beyond narrativity, abstracting and at the same time intensifying patterns of pathos shows the exceptional moment of art history when agitation propaganda and the inaccessible, uninstrumentalisable uniqueness of the closed artwork make their combined impression on the viewer. On the one hand, *Guernica* lent an incontestable reputation to the museum in its political context and, on the other hand, at the peak of the cold war in the fifties, in the age of anti-communist hysteria, it could even be inconvenient (because of Picasso’s later activities). The *Guernica* of MoMA was one step of formal art history towards abstraction, a piece in the chain—but it gained a new meaning on the front cover of Studio International. When the artists of the AWC and GAAG demonstrated in front of it with their own poster, they implied that the later modern, from their point of view traditional artwork—and the museum—had lost its live political contact with the social criti-

⁵⁸ Lucy R. LIPPARD, Biting the Hands: Artists and Museums in New York since 1969. In *Alternative Art in New York, 1965–1985. A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective*. Ed. by Julie AULT. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London. 2002, pp. 79–121, especially pp. 92–93.

cism in which the inhabitants of the New York art world lived; and indeed: the last thing MoMA wanted was to be “current” in the media political sense of the word. Media currentness was a formal tool of criticism for alternative, neo-avant-garde artists—an allusion system where the artists of “appropriation art” were at home in the seventies and eighties. While it may be true that *Guernica* and MoMA could appear to be reactionary or meaningless as a result of their use and misuse by the political demonstration—as was the intention of the action—the whole story is more complex than that. The artists of the AWC and GAAG demanded of the museum the solidarity once shown in connection with *Guernica* and of course they were right to do so. It is a fact, however, that the rewritten poster is no more than a document of cultural history today. The assessment of Picasso’s *Guernica* could be greatly influenced by recalling the story of the painting, but the picture makes a dramatic impression even if the viewer is not acquainted with the story of the Spanish Civil War. The poster made by the artists of the AWC and GAAG however, only attains any meaning if the story told above creates a context around it. The aesthetic and culture historical significance and meaning of the action goes beyond that; it is a demonstration of the dependence of modern museums on the structure of the cultural space in which they are located. The emergence of the media world, the global media space—as we shall later see—does not only influence radically the assessment of museums but also their self-identities, their art policies. The contemporary present succeeding Modernism can be translated into the MoMA paradox as follows: how can museums survive the change that has taken place in the institution system that created them? The Guggenheim, the “starchitect” buildings of the nineties, the sculpturesque museum buildings suggest that the shaping of museums is more and more radically directed towards the target of pleasing their own age. (*Guernica* was, incidentally, taken back to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 1981, after the death of General Franco. The role of the painting in the Spanish society of the post-civil war era is, however, another story.⁵⁹)

Returning to the political and cultural history of MoMA: the exhibition *Information* opened in 1970 tried to ease the tensions between

⁵⁹ Herschel B. CHIPP, *Picasso’s Guernica. History, Transformations, Meanings*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.

MoMA and contemporary neo-avant-garde alternative groups; the exhibition organised by Kynaston McShine—where there was an emphasis on the movements, isms of the time, works and conceptions by Arte Povera, Earthworks, Systems, Process Art and Pop Art were displayed and analysed—was an attempt by the “empire” to strike back. Hans Haacke, who was also invited, continued the actions against the Rockefellers, but the *Information* indicated that MoMA was slowly easing the linear narrative of formal modernness. Haacke’s direct political approach would have been inconceivable within the walls of the museum before. This conceptual work entitled *MoMA Poll* invited visitors to vote and as the colourful ballot cards were deposited in transparent plexi-glass boxes, there could be no doubt as to the results. The question on the card had a direct wording: “Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon’s Indochina Policy be a reason for you not voting for him in November?” Voters were asked to put the card in the ballot box on the left if the answer was yes, and in the box on the right if the answer was no.

The possibility of a new contract with *postmodern* contemporary art—as a solution—was offered by depoliticisation through repeated relativisation from 1970 onwards. Robert Rauschenberg’s exhibition opened in 1977 in MoMA: the appearance of pop in West 53rd Street signalled that there was growing disagreement between permanent and temporary exhibitions. The reception of the exhibition “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art*⁶⁰ organized by William Rubin in 1984 made it manifest that the kind of formalism that disregards contexts of social history and sees cultural exchanges as one-way streets, the tenet of the unquestionability of universal aesthetic norms, was met with radical rejection and proved to be untenable. The *Primitivism* exhibition found itself facing the critique of post-colonialism and not even Rubin’s ever so noble disposition, eruditeness and expertise could stop it from being politically unacceptable.⁶¹ Follo-

⁶⁰ “*Primitivism*” in *20th Century Art. Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*. Ed. by William RUBIN. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984.

⁶¹ Cf. among others: Thomas McEVILLEY, Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief. In Thomas McEVILLEY: *Art and Otherness. Crisis in Cultural Identity*. Documentext, McPherson and Company, New York, 1992, pp. 57–73; and Marianne TORGONICK, William Rubin and the Dynamics of Primitivism. In *Gone Primitive, Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 1990, pp. 119–141.

wing the Andy Warhol retrospective of 1989, the exhibition entitled *High and Low* was a work of self-reflection and criticism organized by Adam Gopnik and Rubin's successor, Kirk Varnedoe, who later died at a tragically young age.

The representation of the idea of modern and of Modernism gradually shifted towards a historical aspect in MoMA. After 1990, the museum no longer sought to find a way to contemporary art through the exclusive aesthetic universalism of the formalism of modern but rather via the historicisation of its own story and experience, their re-installation in a museum environment, that is, via the acceptance of the principle of contextualisation, an approach to relativisation free from dogmatism, the adoption of the practice of fragmentariness. The nineties led towards a new MoMA; one by one, the exhibitions parenthesised the theoretical foundations on which Barr's museum was built and rendered them invalid. (Barbara Kruger, for instance, designed the arrangement of the exhibition *Thinking Print: Books to Billboard* in 1995 and Cindy Sherman's photographs were displayed in 1997 under the title *The Complete Untitled Film Stills*.) A three-part exhibition was organised in 2000 and 2001, before the construction of the new MoMA commenced: *Modern Starts*, *Making Choices* and *Modern Contemporary: Open Ends* attested to an intention of relativisation and historicisation; they were an indication that the museum no longer viewed modern art and the movements of Modernism as an endowment but rather as a critical heritage. The principle of political indifference was also slowly abandoned: the *Open Ends* program presented *October 18, 1977*,⁶² the Gerhard Richter series purchased by MoMA, which was concerned with the prison death of members of the German left-wing terrorist Baader-Meinhof commando. Richter's series became part of MoMA's permanent collection, which is illustrative of the shift away from the Haacke MoMA Poll phase of 1970 and of the turn in the critical strategy of contemporary art.

While Barr—and to some extent d'Harnoncourt—regarded himself as a contemporary of modern art and Modernism, Glenn Lowry, Peter Galassi, Robert Storr and Kirk Varnedoe, the art historians and curators of the new phase of MoMA, have been aware of the critical

⁶² Robert STORR, *Gerhard Richter: October 18, 1977*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2000.

standards of the “contact zone” proposed by Marianne Torgovnick and, later, James Clifford. Danto observed in connection with the exhibition *Modern Despite Modernism* organised by curator Robert Storr as part of the above exhibition series that the concept of normative modern art proposed by Clement Greenberg was too narrow and unsuitable for the interpretation of contemporary—“posthistoire”—art.

“In my view, Greenberg had so closely identified the history of modern art with Modernism that he was unable to recognise that modern art went on after Modernism had more or less come to an end. We were, then, in a new period of art history, in which it had become plain that there was no longer any special way that art had to look—that anything could be a work of art, that nothing external need mark the difference between works of art and anything else. This was the combined result of the thought of Marcel Duchamp, Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys. If art could look any way at all, though, I felt that there was no longer the possibility of any special direction for art, a situation I attempted to describe in my book *After the End of Art*. Contrary to Greenberg, I believed that Modernism was over with rather than merely interrupted. Or better, I believed that Modernist art remained as an option—but one of an indefinite number of options, rather than the defining drive of modern art.”⁶³ The tolerance welcomed by Danto and the separation of the entirety of modern art from the philosophy of Modernism raises art theoretical problems. The minimalist artist Frank Stella expressed a radical objection in connection with the exhibition *Modern Stars*: “A more apt title for the show would have been *Masturbatory Insights*”⁶⁴ Stella found the process critical when MoMA had abandoned its principles of presenting the exclusivity of High Art and its stringent laboratory turned into a memorial museum of modern culture by the 21st century. The Kremlin of Modernism was replaced by an open and pluralist structure—it remains an open question, however, what is meant by High Art in this case: not in opposition to popular culture (as this double dimension was emphasised by *High and Low*) but convergent to it. As was observed by Donald Kuspit, who is—in

⁶³ Arthur C. DANTO, MoMA: What’s in a Name? In *Nation*, 2000/July 17.

⁶⁴ Frank STELLA, Mindless play and thoughtless speculation. In *The Art Newspaper*. No. 114, 2001/May, pp. 62–64.

agreement with Stella—critical of MoMA: “Lowry’s [the director of MoMA] comfortable smile suggests that modern art has surrendered to its fate—accommodated itself to inevitable assimilation into everyday life, as though that was its wish all along—as though, from the first, all it wanted to do was to be understood in everyday terms and loved, however unlovable it looked. Modern art was an ugly frog waiting to be kissed by the princess of public acceptance, magically changing it into a charming prince—a social star. Thus prettified—its act cleaned up by showing that, after all, it is just about such familiar everyday things as people, places, and things—it is no longer what Trilling called ‘serious art, by which we mean such art as stands, overtly or by implication, in an adversary relationship to the dominant culture,’ and thus signals the ‘alienated condition’ of ‘social reality’ itself”⁶⁵ When the “posthistoire,” the view of art after Modernism had abandoned the formalism termed essentialism by Roger Fry, Alfred Barr and Clement Greenberg, not only and not primarily contemporary art theory crossed a Rubicon. Its impact on museums is far more important: does MoMA’s self-criticism not mean that museums anthropologise themselves, that the modern art museum keeps a distance in observing and presenting its own collections? The quiet of the church is replaced by the discrete silence of elegant shops, the artwork has come off the altar and is transferred to the shop window—with the occasional irony in the sacred space. The elimination of essentialism in the museum context—and this is the essence of the MoMA paradox—does not entail the inexorable homogenisation of institutionalism. The spatial realisation of the exclusivity and detached elitism of modern art—which is the subject of the next section—was in harmony with the mission of the museum in a cultural structure where the power over urban space had not yet been taken over by the media. Not even museums can evade the “urban screen,” the continuing present, the total reign of the given moment. The narrow horizons of the short-term present exert a strong influence over the strategies used by the museums conveying the cultural practices of the safekeeping and presentation of works of art. In the absence of a consensus over the long-term social future, the practices of the museum and the Kunsthalle have become inseparable.

⁶⁵ Donald KUSPIT, *The Changing of the Art Guard*. In *The End of Art*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge–London, 2004, p. 10.

arable. The curator standing beside, and then in front of, the art historian is far more concerned with a successful match with the interconnection networks of cultural spaces than with revealing historical processes.

The staff of MoMA—from various points of view but unanimously—regarded modern art and the modernist movement of the thirties to the second half/end of the 1960s as a question of *essentialism*, while from the seventies onwards it more and more plainly became an object of critical construction. The concepts of modern and contemporary became more than synonymous: a tautology. In 1997 MoMA announced an international competition to expand and rebuild the museum and issued its Mission Statement, which is still in effect today.

“That modern and contemporary art originated in the exploration of the ideals and interests generated in the new artistic traditions that began in the late nineteenth century and continue today. [...] That this commitment to contemporary art enlivens and informs our evolving understanding of the traditions of modern art.”⁶⁶ The text is pragmatic, its rhetoric is in sharp contrast with that of the manifestos; its implications show that it is a precondition for the renewal of the museum that it survive itself. And although the tradition of MoMA is increasingly difficult to elude—in contradiction with Clement Greenberg’s claim, who always stood by essentialism but remained silent over the last decades of his life—the emptiness of the artistic notions of modern and contemporary may nevertheless be cause for concern. As was also noted by Hal Foster in connection with the new MoMA:

“This might not be a problem if MoMA did not insist on the connection between the Modernist and the contemporary. ‘You can be a museum, or you can be modern, but you can’t be both,’ Gertrude Stein once remarked, but she also believed the United States to be the oldest country because it had lived in the 20th century the longest. And for the most part ‘museum’ and ‘modern’ were not so contradictory in the States—MoMA is the primary case in point. The question for the museum now is different: can it be both Modernist and contemporary? Its leaders decided that it must be, a decision that was over-determined. In 1929 there was no divide between Modernist and

⁶⁶ *Imagining the Future of the Museum of Modern Art*. Ed. by Barbara ROSS. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Distributed by Harry N. Abrams Inc., New York, 1998, p. 20.

contemporary, and as late as 1949 MoMA agreed to sell to the Metropolitan all work that had become established, to keep its focus on the new and the now. But the agreement was voided four years later, and a permanent collection became a central focus (the Modern and the Met have competed for 20th-century art ever since). MoMA continued to buy and to receive contemporary work not only out of its old mission but out of a new will to power: all hands (the trustees especially) wanted to stay in the hunt, to use the Modernist collection to back the contemporary acquisitions, and this holds true to this day. As long as 'Modernist' included 'contemporary' this arrangement was not too stressed; now, however, such a relation (let alone an equation) cannot be assumed."⁶⁷

The metamorphosis of MoMA and the critique of the renewal have broader than local significance: it is a basic lesson for conceivable theory(s) of contemporary art, since this story is to a great extent the archetype of the context of the posthistorical museum. The post-modern museum therefore denotes a "posthistoire," posthistorical museum, which, in concord with the principle of pluralism, no longer possesses a single binding narrative, but carries countless possibilities. The great narrative is replaced by a chain of spectacles. Museum collections and the principles of their presentation no longer rest on a certainty assumed by necessity. These museums do not constitute sacred spaces for their visitors, where aesthetic classification conveys certainty and becomes a personal experience; they are, instead, places where categorial uncertainty and sensory seduction rule. Contemporary museums—which did not merely *survive* the separation of the concepts of modern and contemporary (the historicisation of the one, and the loss of content in the other), but were created *after* it—play the game according to different rules.

This holds for collections and museums which were mostly created after the seventies, at the time of the second museum age. Uncertainty, pluralism and anthropological self-criticism are self-evident theoretical requirements here, and the canon is no longer a precondition for representation but rather an object of representation to reflect on. The critical interpretation of these museums raises the issue of access to the notion of aesthetic experience and its cultural use.

⁶⁷ Hal FOSTER, It's Modern but is it contemporary? In *London Review of Books*. Vol. 26. No. 4, 2004/December, pp. 23–25.

In what follows, we shall be concerned with modern collections and museums that were created after the dissipation of the canon. The partly political and partly architecture historical analysis attempts to shed light on the question why it is impossible to speak of aesthetic experience without interpreting the metamorphosis of institutional forms; and why cultural studies, where the interpretation of the history of aesthetic classification has been abandoned, and museum sociology have remained inescapably empty. The discussion progresses from the collections to their crisis and on towards contemporary galleries, “museums” with no collections. And from a different perspective: from buildings created for the safekeeping of artworks towards buildings existing as artworks; from linearity to ramification, to libraries of Babel. That is: from spirit of the place towards the world of *non-lieux*, from traditional urban spaces towards the fabric of the urban screen. The historical case studies of establishments, the analysis of interconnections leads to the interpretation of the aesthetic experience of contemporary art. The contemporary museum boom, the second age—albeit it cannot boast of great collections, nor of their unambiguous arrangement—does provide something: that which was promised by one of the important exhibitions in MoMA a few years back: *The Museum as Muse*.⁶⁸

Kynaston McShine, the curator of the exhibition, characterised the relationship between the artists and the museum—in an undeniably witty metaphor—as the relationship between two superpowers. “Like two superpowers that mutually respect each other, even mutually depend on each other, artists and museums nevertheless watch each other vigilantly—as if practicing for the field on which they are engaged together, the miraculous field of visual art.”⁶⁹

I believe otherwise. The opposition of the two great powers destined to co-operate rested—similarly to the political reality of the cultural cold war—on an agreement over basic principles. The modern artist, who attacked the museum in its existence, clearly did not see the institution the way its proponents saw it. That modern artist did not wish to identify with it or be reflected by it. At the time of Barr’s “Torpedo Diagram”, several artists believed that progress would lead out of the museum and go beyond it. Modern art, just as the Archaic Apollo torso, had a mission—urged by the silent consensus—to change your life

⁶⁸ McSHINE, *The Museum as Muse*.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

("Du muss dein Leben ändern"), and the overture to the new life will either happen within these walls, or society itself will be renewed. The contrast between high and popular culture relaxed in the promise of a new society; the voices of redemption were equally heard by those who were driven by a sense of class and those who looked to the service of nature or the autonomous renewal of technology in their hopes for the advent of the new age. The classic avant-garde artist who leaves the museum does so because the artwork now signifies the reorganisation of the entire society. When Duchamp—in a utopia beyond politics—offers shrunk versions of his life's work to the museum for safekeeping and presents them to the spectators in a small suitcase, he foreshadows the global museum of the early 21st century. Duchamp in fact challenges the museum and demonstrates that he is the strongest: the museum is a "liveried servant."⁷⁰ Marcel Broodthaers does something similar in the sixties, when he treats the moments of collection and musealisation as a conceptual gag, a historical absurdity. And perhaps he was the first for whom the museum really was a muse rather than an opponent.

Because if the museum is a muse, there is no need to defeat it. Postmodern art has left the museum behind, it is outside of it, and can thus use it as a muse. Mark Dion, Damien Hirst, Susan Hiller and all those who "play" with the museum, make use of a dear old cultural turn: they recall its spirit. "Tell me, O Muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide"⁷¹: poetry recalls what was once reality. The museum is a cancelled place in this metaphor; its reconstruction and maintenance are equally important for artists and staff not as two superpowers any more, but as the joint servants of the same superpower. And the only superpower is the market. The artist takes refuge in the museum, for inspiration, quietude, attention, hope.

2. The White Cube

Spectaculum architecture has caught up with museums over the past decades; but before that it was a rare phenomenon for a museum *building* to play such a significant role in the mythology of the given

⁷⁰ Phrase quoted from a well-known poem of Endre Ady, *Hunn, új legenda*, 1913.

⁷¹ HOMER, *The Odyssey*. Trans. by Samuel Butler. Project Gutenberg edition, 1999. <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1727>

institution, in the evolution of its reputation, as in the case of MoMA. When MoMA was opened in 1929, six rooms of around 400 square meters were rented in Heckscher Building, next to the Plaza Hotel to house the library, the offices and the temporary galleries. The site of the building is now occupied by the Bergdorf Goodman department store. The museum occupied a central position in the city back then as well, which is indicated by its proximity to the Plaza, Central Park and the Fifth Avenue. It moved to West 53rd Street in 1932, where it still is today. The original building in Number 11 was first leased from John D. Rockefeller Jr., the founder Abby Aldrich Rockefeller's husband. The building was acquired by the museum in 1936, soon after which the neighbouring buildings were also bought, and finally the first permanent building of MoMA was constructed between 1936 and 1939. Alfred Barr, who was on his European tour at the time, wanted to commission—on Philip Johnson's advice—Mies van der Rohe to design the museum building but the task was finally taken by two American architects, Philip L. Goodwin and Edward D. Stone. In the 1930s, there were almost exclusively two and three-storey urban villas on West 53rd Street, but construction work had started on the Rockefeller Centre in 1929, which was probably a major influence on Barr's and the architects' imagination and their options. The Rockefeller Centre was originally intended to function as a cultural institution but it ended up as a commercial centre as a consequence of the Great Depression; the Radio City Music Hall project was completed, though. MoMA was literally and metaphorically in the shadow of the entire complex. (What is more, the museum operated in the Rockefeller Centre during the construction work.) That is how the history of MoMA illustrates the limited interpretation strategies of formalism, since the spirit of the concrete, physical place has a role to play in the archaeology of the aesthetic standard. The building of Goodwin and Stone—notwithstanding all its renovations—still determines the architectural order of MoMA, and has become a worldwide exemplar of modern museum space design.

The architecture of first generation museums was characterized by the dominance of imperial Classicism⁷² in the early 1930s. The Phila-

⁷² Steven McLeod BEDFORD, William L. McDONALD, *John Russell Pope. Architect of Empire*. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, 1998; and Robert A. M. STERN, Gregory GILMARTIN, John MASSENGALE, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism 1890–1915*. Rizzoli International Publications, New York, 1995.

delphia Museum of Art, which nicely fitted the tradition of antique imitation, was built for the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 after the designs of the young Bavarian immigrant Hermann J. Schwarzmann, and was extended and rebuilt in the twenties. The Cleveland Museum of Art was built in the same style between 1913 and 1916 (after Hubbell and Benes' designs), as was the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York between 1880 and 1911 after the designs of Calvet Vaux, Richard Morris Hunt and the McKim, Mead and White architectural firm; the John Russell Pope led Neo-Classical expansion largely ignoring the Ruskinian Neo-Gothic block of the American Museum of Natural History also took place around this time, in 1936. The building of the Washington National Gallery of Art was also designed by John Russell Pope and was constructed between 1935 and 1941. These buildings evoke Schinkel's Altes Museum, Leo von Klenze's Glyptothek and Robert Smirke's British Museum at the same time; the visitor walks across immense stairways and rotundas, through solemn and meditative, sublime and silent halls until she arrives at the site of historical collections. The colossal buildings of imperial Classicism hide barely perceptible entangled tales of virtual culture historical contexts behind them. 18th-century Philhellenism and the 19th-century antiquity-reception of Classicism are the direct models and it is their prefigurations that appear here—as unintentional associations.

The urbanist context of the museums of imperial Classicism is substantially different from that of the Metropolitan Museum. The blocks of the Washington Smithsonian Museum line the enormous park of the Mall on two sides—just as Central Park is the immediate context of the Metropolitan, the AMNH (American Museum of Natural History) and the Guggenheim. MoMA, situated in a side street, belongs to a different urban grid; it may be significant, spacious or large relative to a side street scale. The narrow 53rd Street did not allow an experience of spaciousness to be created: the MoMA block cannot be seen in its entirety from the front, it cannot all be within our field of vision at the same time. Thus we enter the building adjusting to the context of a denser grid, a side street scale. The way we enter a shop or a department store in the area, directly from the street. Neither the modern archetype of Schinkel's Altes Museum, the aesthetic sublimity of the rotunda of the Pantheon evocation, nor the imperial greatness of Russell Pope's AMNH Roosevelt Rotunda is present here.

MoMA therefore offers a relationship of equals to its visitors, to the inhabitants of the city; the absence of an extensive space necessary for isolatedness and grandness is the novelty in MoMA. At the same time, its sterility, its almost clinical professionalism induces a feeling of self-consciousness in the visitor; the unbroken, minimalist surface of the International Style street front produced a far more dramatic effect in the thirties than it does now. The facade is the “semantic notice board” of every building—and this is especially true for a museum. The fact that there are no columns, ornaments, historical elements of architecture still remains an important message in itself. The absence of historicism, the exclusivity of the modernism of contemporary architecture display the same paradox in the space which characterizes the collections of the museum. The historicism of the 19th century, the physical representation of the museum as a Greek temple was not simply a feature of imperial Classicism but also constituted a legitimisation of modern collections. The architecture distanced from the present of society stood for the value of the heritage and also provided a guarantee for the incontestability of the museum. The accelerated rhythm, the fundamental experience of the modern city, does not hold for museums. The building complexes of the Berlin Altes Museum, the Museum Insel, the Munich Königsplatz, the Altes-Neue Pinakothek debar the present of urban lifestyle in some sense. There are of course political interests behind this; Tony Bennett points out in his study cited above that the machinery of the “exhibitionary complex,” the network of spaces that will not suffer any criticism was a distinguished spot of the oppressive structures of modern societies. This is one reason why Foucault’s critical approach to space has grown to be so important for museum history; it has made manifest that the history of the arrangement of collections is an institution of the self-representational mechanism of society.

In MoMA’s case, the experience of the revolutionary sensation of presentness cost the building and the museum a legitimisation deficit; this attribute also surfaces in the effectively continuous rebuilding process. The story of MoMA’s renovations and expansions is not a unique phenomenon, though: several great collections have been expanded recently; these additions have often had their significance from an architecture historical point of view and have always made a considerable impact on the spirit of the building. Pei expanded the National Gallery in Washington; the new East Building has the symbolic

task of leading the building away from imperial isolatedness and adapting it to the spirit of the late 20th and early 21st century. Pei's other legendary reconstruction project, the pyramid of the Louvre, similarly creates a symbolic centre and provides practical solutions at the same time. The pyramid at last forms an unambiguous entrance to the space of the Louvre while creating a tension between the high-tech glass structure and the original building. The oval court covered by Norman Foster similarly restructured the internal space of the British Museum. In all three examples, the boundaries between the original buildings and the expansions are clearly perceptible—in contrast with MoMA. Although the rebuilding projects were careful to leave the existing parts of the building recognizable as much as possible, the continually changing MoMA virtually swallowed up its own prehistory. The building became a palimpsest, a difficult to read urban text, which of course fits the nature of late and postmodern urbanism much better than the above “easy to read” expansions do.

The minimalism, undeniable elegance, high-tech appearance and lucidity of the International Style gave the building a character on a par with its collection. This corresponded perfectly to Barr's intentions as well, who was well aware that the architectural implementation of MoMA was of crucial importance. And as the collection came into being and transformed together with the building, MoMA surpassed its age: now that we live in the age of (to use Francis Haskell's phrase) ephemeral museums,⁷⁵ travelling exhibitions, we can see that temporary displays were also significant here. MoMA is both a Kunsthalle and a traditional museum that takes pride in its permanent collection. Analyzing the autonomous aesthetic discourse of museum architecture, it can be seen that great collections may be sustained in decidedly meagre buildings carrying forced compromises with them, such as the Kulturforum in Berlin. Given the building, the presentation of its first-rate collection had no other option but minimalism.

It is important in this context—precisely because of the outstanding significance of the building—that MoMA has become an exemplar of the tradition of stern, impersonal architecture. It is the archetype of the modern museum, where the building does not overshadow the collection—which is a fairly frequent phenomenon today, as in the

⁷⁵ Francis HASKELL, *The Ephemeral Museum. Old Master Paintings and the Rise of Art Exhibition*. Yale University Press, New Haven–London, 2000.



Whitney Museum of American Art
Designed by Marcel Breuer

Photo: László Jakab Orsós, 2008

case of James Stirling's Neue Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart,⁷⁴ Hans Hollein's Museum Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt or Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim museum. In the "content-container" debate, MoMA and its tradition represent the modern attitude of by now incontestably historical value which focuses on the presentation of the artwork rather than on turning the museum building into an autonomous creation, a public sculpture. The building was expanded and reconstructed in this vein. In the fifties and sixties, the museum was first extended on the west side after Philip Johnson's designs and under his supervision; at the next stage it was again Johnson who created the sculpture garden named after the museum founder Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. In 1964, he designed new buildings (including a new entrance and a hall) to be raised on the neighbouring site to the east of the museum in Mies van der Rohe's style. The Whitney Museum of American Art was built between 1949 and 1952 next to the 54th Street side of MoMA after Auguste L. Noel and Philip Johnson's designs. This building was constructed in a style to match MoMA's and when the Whitney moved to its current location, the "Art Brut" style Ziggurat building on Madison Avenue in 1966—Marcel Breuer's work is also a notable piece of modern museum architecture—, its vacated building was redesigned and joined up with the rest of the complex.

The usable area of the museum was substantially enlarged by Cesar Pelli's additions in 1984, and soon after that—after lengthy public debates and international competitions—the museum building was comprehensively rebuilt. The reconstruction process after Yoshio Taniguchi's designs⁷⁵ began in 2001 and the new MoMA opened to the public in 2004. Yoshio Taniguchi had previously designed museum buildings but had not worked in the United States; he beat a few star architects in the competition, since several proposals had been submitted by architects who played a decisive role in gaining popular acceptance for the approach which regarded cultural institutions as autonomous, having the status of a sculpture or an icon: Rem Koolhaas, Herzog, De Meuron, Tschumi and Dominique Perrault, to name a few. In Taniguchi's architectural legacy, the cultural logic of the

⁷⁴ Thorsten RODIEK, *James Stirling – Die Neue Staatsgalerie Stuttgart*. Gerd Hatje, Stuttgart, 1984.

⁷⁵ Yoshio TANIGUCHI, *Nine Museums*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2004; and Glenn D. LOWRY, Terence RILEY, *The New Museum of Modern Art*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2005.



The new MOMA
Designed by Yoshio Taniguchi
Photo: László Jakab Orsós, 2008

originality and reconstruction of a building differs from the European and American predilection for authenticity. (Let us consider an example from the works of contemporary Japanese architecture which influenced the MoMA rebuilding project: the Naoshima Art Museum built in 1992 after Tadao Ando's designs.)

While European cultural heritage preservation regards the origins of the history of the building—the state which is recorded as original and is (re)constructed at a later stage—as authentic, this other approach sees the process of rebuilding as an evident state of the building. Taniguchi's designs did not efface the old building but neither did he treat it as a fetish—it did not turn into an architectural museum, an assembly of evoked pasts. He approached the question of past and present without prejudices and took away as much as he needed to and where he needed to. The result is that the new MoMA is reminiscent of the old one, since it preserves parts of it; but it radically contrasts with it at the same time, just as the old building did with imperial Classicism. As was observed by Arthur C. Danto, Taniguchi fundamentally changed MoMA's relationship with the city.⁷⁶ The old MoMA, with its entrance on 53rd Street, was a closed world—notwithstanding the fact that some parts of it offered decidedly dramatic views of neighbouring streets. I had the experience of a peculiar sensation of seclusion, abstract flotation and openness several times—it was an essential feature of the old MoMA. The completely closed exhibition spaces had artificial lighting, their architectural arrangement reflected the presentation technique of the “white cube,”

⁷⁶ “What immediately strikes a visitor to the 2004 museum, designed by Yoshio Taniguchi to coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary of MoMA, is the way in which the museum is now literally open to the city. The lobby is, in a qualified sense, a pedestrian passage, which one can freely enter and exit; and the upper galleries allow views of New York to enter through generously proportioned windows, as well as the glass-curtain wall facing east. It is as if New York were, as the engine of modernity, acknowledged as an integral part of what the museum exists to show. But one is made conscious of art even if one merely traverses the lobby from one cross street to the other. Upon entering the walkway from 54th Street, one sees Barnett Newman's great sculpture *Broken Obelisk*, designed as a memorial to Martin Luther King Jr., standing on the second floor of the immense atrium and rising to a skylight four floors up. Ordinarily, one encounters this deeply moving work standing on the same level. Seen from below, the inverted shaft of the obelisk seems to descend to earth like a stalactite—or to point downward like a stylized index finger—rather than rising upward from the point on which it is balanced. The shaft thus acquires an astounding weightlessness, as if it were floating in air.” Arthur C. DANTO, *The Rebirth of the Modern*. In *Nation*, 2005. Jan 31st.

the principle of isolation—Barr’s philosophy and MoMA’s legendary approach to artworks. The “white cube” is the translation of the formalist stance into the language of museological artwork presentation. The modern museum here does not constitute a strict linearity that purely follows the principle of chronology and development; it is, instead, a scene of the autonomy of the aesthetic approach, a place for both forgetting and creating. The exclusivity of the aesthetic approach with the dominance of the great works of art, one of the basic myths of museological arrangement, was also the focus of Wilhelm von Bode’s work in Berlin.” Bode had to react to the crisis caused by this new notion of a museum, which, just a few decades earlier with Schinkel’s and Klenze’s museum structures, as well as others erected outside the German empire, had become authoritative: This approach of strict chronological presentation of the artwork according to geographically demarcated ‘schools’ was also shared by the newly founded science of arts, which saw artworks above all as historical documents. Bode, however, was looking for a more aesthetically satisfying answer. His attention was focused on the ‘masterpiece’, a basically autonomous and timeless creation, in which the skill of an artist was uniquely consolidated.”⁷⁷ The dialogue of the masterworks took place in the Epochenraum (the “period room”), the space created by aesthetic norms and direct experiences. Both traditions were relevant for Alfred H. Barr. Visitors to MoMA—right up to its rebirth in 2004, when the architectural space opened up the museum to the city, allowing freedom of movement within—had to conform to the rules

⁷⁷ Bernhard SCHULZ, From the Kaiser Friedrich Museum to the Bode Museum. In *Das Bode-Museum. Schatzkammer der Könige*. Ed. by Carola WEDEL. Jaron, Berlin, 2006, p. 22. For an academic history of art—the debate between Herman Grimm and Bode, see: Alexis JOACHIMIDES, The Museum’s Discourse on Art. The Formation of Curatorial Art History in Turn-of-the-Century Berlin. In *Museums and Memory*. Ed. by Susan A. CRANE. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2000, pp. 200–221. The galleries of the Bode Museum, opened in 2006, reconstruct the debate between exhibition principles driven by aesthetic pleasure versus didactic norms in the context of the 21st century. The museum thus provides an experience departing from the chronological rigor of the “Gemäldegalerie” for present day Berlin.

“True to Wilhelm von Humboldt’s motto of ‘enjoy first, learn later’ when he described the aims of the ‘bürgerliche Museum’, we also have intentionally favoured looking at art over teaching art history.” Arne EFFENBERGER, An Invitation to Explore the Bode Museum. In *The Bode-Museum, 100 Masterpieces. Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Skulpturensammlung, Münzkabinett*. Ed. by Antje-Fee KÖLLERMANN, Iris WENDERHOLM. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, 2006, p. 20.

imposed on them by this conception for decades: an invisible hand ushered them from room to room, from one masterpiece to the next; it led them towards discoveries through aesthetic experience, towards creating a virtual universe among masterpieces. That is, the principle of the “white cube” used chronology and geographical separation; the schools represented in the individual exhibition rooms corresponded to the relationships depicted in Barr’s “Torpedo Diagrams”. The visitors at MoMA, however, were not given detailed commentary to read, they were not pampered with knowledge on art or social history: the display arrangements relied on the trust placed in the redemptive power of the aesthetic experience occasioned by the artworks. This could be so, as Greenberg’s and Barr’s ideas of modern art and abstraction were—despite all their political disagreements—quite close to each other. They did not regard works of art as documents of a historical period (i.e., textual commentary), a heritage or fossil demanding and generating knowledge, but rather as an existential reality, which—if “used” well—constituted a source of certainty beyond the experience of history or society. This view was consistent with the position of the artists, the modern masters whose works are central to the MoMA collection.

The “*Epochenraum*” approach played an important role in some of René d’Harnoncourt’s exhibitions, at the legendary early exhibitions of Beaubourg led by Pontus Hulten, and in the overall presentation technique used by the Musée D’Orsay. That is: the debate between Bode and Grimm—the priority of education versus pleasure and the discussion on methods of education—has grown to be an inescapable issue for modern and postmodern museums. Barr severed every artwork from its context in the name of formalism and presented it in its abstract totality to the perceiver similarly seen as an abstract entity. The normative nature of the path of enforced perception was also shrouded in silence: just as the artwork was deprived of its context and history—Barr insisted on minimal commentary—so the perceiver was deprived of class, of language and of origins. The artwork and its perceiver were locked up together in the closed space of the “white cube,” in the assumed timeless, ideal space of modern art, and the rigor and radicalism of this stripped-down situation suited the artworks displayed here. Barr and his colleagues did not leave any traces; those who entered MoMA left their particular sentiments, their sense of class, their origins behind. While MoMA secluded itself

from the city where it lived, its visitors could in return free themselves from their daily lives. The visitor to the modern museum contemplated in the silence of a clinic: she saw nothing but the artwork itself. No direct existentialist visual dictatorship of the kind offered by the “white cube” of modern art had been seen before by a museum visitor. One reason why Bazin’s clinic metaphor is so pertinent is that it discloses the process held to be ideal by MoMA: a clinic is a place for control, for recovery. We are tolerant of the impersonal environment here, hygiene is the first priority—and I cannot help seeing a disconcerting similarity between the presentation principles of the Dresden Museum of Hygiene and those of MoMA. A clinic cures, that is, in some sense transforms its patients; perceiving a modern artwork similarly brings about an invisible, disciplined, individual and revolutionary change. The galleries of MoMA did not reveal—and this still holds today to some extent—what happened in the century when the displayed artworks were created; or whether there was a connection between historical facts and artworks. The answer given by the “white cube” is clear: there was not. There is nothing but the artwork and the individual left alone with it. In the legendary photographs depicting Barr, the gaze of the perceiver studies, “learns” the artwork: the great transformation, the museum metamorphosis occurs exclusively through the visual experience. The “white cube” of MoMA conforms in this respect to the late modern principle of literature which similarly rejects linear narrative, and regards awkward self-evidence as kitsch. Greenberg saw artworks as tools suited to analysing human self-awareness, and considered everything that diverted attention from this radical, anthropological self-examination to be a compromise. MoMA created a perception environment of the kind that reading Eliot, Beckett or Celan demands: Eliot’s readers will not get anywhere if they associate poetry with the experience of personality; Beckett’s readers do not learn anything of the characters, there is no past, there is no way out of the closed space. Certain spaces of modern theatre, some of Bob Wilson’s or Pina Bausch’s performances also offer a “white cube” experience.

Decontextualisation, the act of severing the artwork from history, allows artworks displaying formal affinity to be placed side by side in the comparative anatomy of the International Style. When visiting the old MoMA, I often had the sensation of a chasm gaping between individual artworks: as if classic Barr-style essentialism had created so

many fragments out of the works. With museum narrative relegated to the background, MoMA is a place to learn the depth, the extensiveness and the pastness of the universalist experience of modern art. It happened on a number of occasions that I visited MoMA and the New Museum of Contemporary Art—founded by Marcia Tucker who died at a tragically young age in 2006—on the same day; the New Museum has always focused on analyzing the relationship between contemporary art and society, that is, it embraces a paradigm which has nothing to do with either a clinic or a church: it is a workshop. The museum situated on Broadway between Houston Street and Prince Street in SoHo is independent of the Modernism mythology of contemporary art; its art sociological norms are radically different from those of MoMA: it is an important venue of representing social conflicts, of alternative canons and marginal cultures.⁷⁸

When Taniguchi rebuilt MoMA, he did not wipe away or close formal elements of the building but—in agreement with the curators of the nineties—de-emphasised the tradition of the “white cube.” The centre of MoMA is now occupied by a garden open on both sides, the museum is in effect part of the city; this radical spiritual novelty is embodied in gentle architectural solutions. The galleries of the museum were given more height, the dichotomy of sections closed and open to the city has vanished. It is this sensation that I call MoMA surrealism: I would stand under the glass dome added with Cesar Pelli’s extension, ascend the escalator, look down at everyday life on 54th Street, floating right in the middle of New York, then walk through the closed rooms, the world of modern art. MoMA now offers an entirely different experience of space. The visitor encounters the artworks in the space of the city; gazing around from below, she can

⁷⁸ *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*. Ed. by Russel FERGUSON, Martha GEVER, Trinh T. MINH-HA, Cornel WEST, Foreword: Marcia TUCKER. MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 1992; and *Alternative Art in New York, 1965–1985. A Cultural Politics Book for the Social Text Collective*. Ed. by Julie AULT. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis–London, 2002.

The story of the heyday and transformation of SoHo—even only in connection with MoMA—is far beyond the scope of this study, and also my competence. I have been to SoHo several times since 1991, seen several exhibitions at the galleries of the alternative scene, but it is not at all sufficient for a systematic critical comparison. What should be noted here, however, is that SoHo has radically changed. Most of the contemporary art galleries have moved to Chelsea, where some of the galleries—Barbara Gladstone’s, for instance—have become practically indistinguishable from the museums.



The new MOMA
 Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden from a window
Photo: Péter György, 2007



The new MOMA. Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden
 Richard Serra Sculpture, *Forty Years*
Photo: Péter György, 2007

see the great artworks of the 20th century. The exhibition spaces and the corridors are broken up and opened up by windows. The foundations of the “white cube” have not been disturbed, but the principles of chronology and formal equivalence have been disrupted, thus allowing the visitor to move around more freely, without constraints. A window in the museum wall, an opening to the city, means something different in MoMA than it does in the Metropolitan, for instance, where there is a view to Central Park between the period rooms of the American wing: garden architecture—the garden behind the Egyptian temple is the Garden of Eden itself,—the crossing points of historical sequencing meet here. From the coffee room on the top level of Tate Modern, there is a view to the other side of the river: two tourist spectacles in one. MoMA, however, opens to an urban fabric, to contemporary society, from which it has distanced itself for decades. This architectural openness parallels the atmosphere surrounding the bottom of several midtown skyscrapers: the urban open space. The new MoMA appears to help drive the spirit of the cold war era away. It also illustrates how complex museum history is, how difficult it is to reconstruct it: interestingly, these establishments entrusted with the safekeeping of the documents, the sources of cultural memory constantly wipe their own traces away, make their pasts invisible with every restructuring. The homes of cultural memories are also the spaces of forgetting.

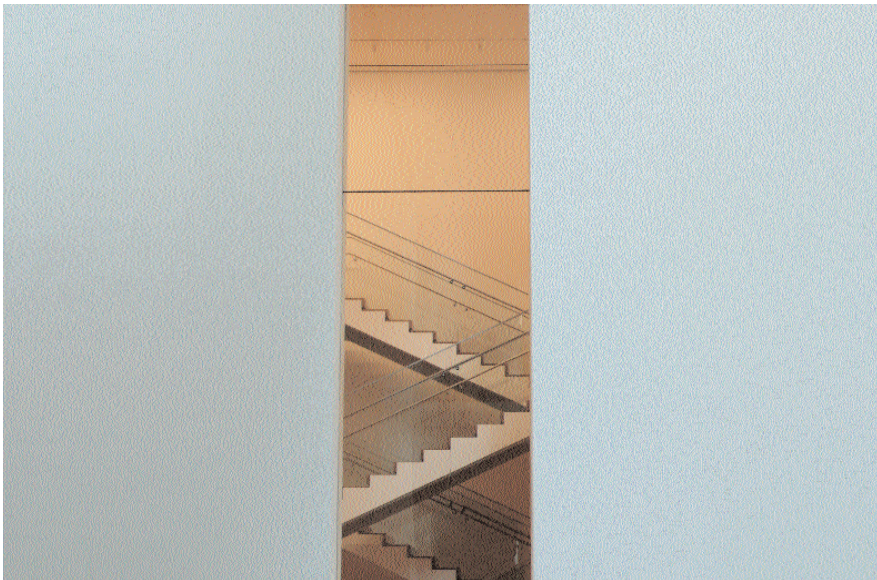
3. Museum of Non-Objective Painting: The Guggenheim Museum

MoMA and its story—the circumstances of its establishment, the development of its collections, its architectural features—have come to be a virtually mythic exemplar of contemporary art, architecture and museum history; the same way—*mutatis mutandis*,—the American story of the Guggenheim museums, replete with cultural exchanges, has attained global significance. Both museums owe their existence to a group of philanthropists, but while the Rockefeller family’s efforts to create MoMA were motivated by the desire to popularize modern American political identity, Peggy and Solomon R. Guggenheim were more concerned with art historical considerations of promoting their personal taste. The decades long dominance of New York—which



Inside the new MOMA

Photo: Péter György, 2007



Lobby inside the new MOMA

Photo: Péter György, 2007

was evident in the contemporary art scene as well—was an integral part of MoMA's history; the successes and failures of the global responsibility of the Guggenheim museums are similarly inseparable from the international reception of events in America, especially after 1989. It was then, after the end of the cultural cold war, during Thomas Krens' time as director and then president of the foundation, that the mission of the Guggenheim museums as a global institution became especially prominent.⁷⁹

Hilla von Rebay came from a cosmopolitan military family of German aristocracy; she studied to be a painter and practiced abstract painting under the influence of contemporary avant-garde art for a few years after World War I and then inspired by Kandinsky. She also had a collection of her own.⁸⁰ She moved to New York after World War I; in an era when Hemingway and Fitzgerald (and their generation), for instance, regarded Europe as the Promised Land, young cosmopolitan upper class groups from the old world, including Hilla von Rebay, hoped to fulfil their dreams in America. Rebay, who mostly painted portraits over the years after the war, met the Guggenheims in New York. They first encountered non-representational paintings in the German family's house in Baden on one of their European tours. In an interview in 1966, Hilla Rebay remembers this event as a great turning point in her life; her excitement suggests she knows she is relating a creation myth. "I was in Europe with the Guggenheims and they came to visit my parents in Baden and that's where he saw some Non-Objective paintings on the walls. Somehow he saw them. 'Ah,' he said, 'That's what I want to collect.' And I said 'Mr. Guggenheim, you're much too old for that—in fifteen years. But this is not now. All right, you'll only make yourself ridiculous.' I was always very sensitive about anything that was new. I wanted it for myself and I was never interested in what other people thought but I didn't ask their opinion either. I never exposed them to my real work. Nobody knew what I was really doing. I did what they understood and that was all. 'But here' he said, 'this is fabulous.

⁷⁹ Joseba ZULAIKA, Krens's Taj Mahal. The Guggenheim's Global Love Museum. In *Discourse, Journal for Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture*, Vol. 23, No. 1, 2001/Winter, pp. 100–118.

⁸⁰ Eleanor HEARTNEY, Hilla Rebay. Visionary Baroness. In *Art in America*, 2003/September, pp. 112–117; and *Art of Tomorrow. Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim*. Exhibition Catalogue. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2005.



“A window in the museum wall, an opening to the city”

The new MoMA

Photo: Péter György, 2007

And I want to buy these two paintings.”⁸¹ Guggenheim’s motivations are clear: “now I want to do something prominent.” There is no doubt that some aesthetic radicalism helped him stand out among all those philanthropists.

Guggenheim and Rebay’s co-operation was in several respects different from the story of MoMA’s founders. While for the Rockefeller family and their friends, MoMA was to some extent an institution in the service of direct ideological objectives deriving from an American sense of political mission, the Guggenheim started with a co-operation between stubborn (and somewhat dilettante) dreamers—which finally attained universal significance. A painter and a philanthropist together created the Museum of Non-Objective Painting; its first director was Rebay herself. Rebay and Solomon Guggenheim did not believe that the most important task of the museum was to give an overview of contemporary art but wanted it to define the kind of painting style from which a spiritual breakthrough could be expected, the manifestation of the redeeming role of abstract art.⁸² The belief in the mythic powers of art—“the Temple of Non-Objectivity and Devotion”—became an aesthetic standard, in which Kandinsky’s art and writings had an important role to play. His manifesto on art and religion, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*,⁸³ published in 1912 made a profound impression on Rebay; it is no coincidence that Kandinsky is represented by over a hundred pictures in the Guggenheim collection. The lonesome modern painter—the new Moses—the spiritual first person plural freed from material, linguistic and country bonds, leaves objective elements behind in the name of the human race as it rediscovered itself, and enters the world of documenting, painting, inner need. “In any composition the material side may be more or less omitted in proportion as the forms used are more or less material, and for them substituted pure abstractions, or largely dematerialised objects.

⁸¹ Smithsonian Archives of American Art. Bruce Hooten’s interview with Hilla von Rebay, 1966. <http://archivesofamericanart.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/rebay66.htm>

⁸² Jack QUINAN, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum. A Historian’s Report. In *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*. Vol. 52, No. 4. 1993/Dec, pp. 466–482; and Samiran CHANCHANI, Between icon and institution. The vacillating significance of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum. In *The Journal of Architecture*. Vol. 5, No. 2, 2000/Summer, pp. 159–188.

⁸³ Vassily KANDINSKY, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. Trans. by Michael T. SADLER. Dover, New York, Publications 1977.

The more an artist uses these abstracted forms, the deeper and more confidently will he advance into the kingdom of the abstract.”⁸⁴ In contrast with MoMA’s rational philosophy emphasising the world shaping dimensions of industrial progress, the signature of the Guggenheim collection is the absence of specific dimensions; it seeks a spiritual redemption through universal art, the remoulding of the human spirit. MoMA presented individual artworks in isolation, the Guggenheim drew a single frame around the artworks and installations and interpreted them as a Gesamtkunstwerk.

The Museum of Non-Objective painting opened its first exhibition in 1939 in a former car showroom on East 54th Street, where the visual display determining the entire space was accompanied by classical music. A few years later, in 1943, Hilla von Rebay invited Frank Lloyd Wright to design a permanent building for the museum, which proved to be a determinative decision. The designs of the mythical master of modern American architecture—constructed after a long period of waiting and several difficulties—determined the fate, the fame and reputation of the collection and the museum in a manner and to a degree unprecedented in the history of modern museums. Wright’s building—which is undoubtedly a prominent piece in his overall remarkable repertoire—follows the hard-to-define principles of “organic architecture” and architectural sculpture, and has engendered several controversies. Similarly to MoMA, it marked a path in contemporary museum architecture which continues to have universal validity up to the present day.⁸⁵

Wright—similarly to modern European painters of the early 20th century—did not see art and architecture as an essentially technical issue but as a spiritual problem of mediating between nature and society. Wright had been brought up in a puritan Unitarian family environment. As an adult, he was strongly attracted to the American spiritual transcendentalism, universalism,⁸⁶ embraced by Jefferson, Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman, Thorstein Veblen and Woodrow Wilson. Under the influence of this tradition, the antitrust “New Freedom” policy, Wright

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 40.

⁸⁵ Among architectural references to the spiral of the Solomon A. Guggenheim Museum we should mention Pei’s extension to the Deutsches Museum in Berlin and the Budapest House of the Future museum foyer of modest dimensions and its staircase, which is also a tribute to Wright’s building.

⁸⁶ Robert C. TWOMBLY, *Frank Lloyd Wright. His Life and His Architecture*. John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1979.

was considerably more critical of contemporary capitalism than, for instance, Philip Johnson who saw the Guggenheim Museum building as an incontestable achievement of 20th-century American architecture. Wright's museum building rested on the idea of an organic society regarded as the American archetype. He saw the natural world and nature-inspired urban architecture as the authentic *American* answer to the crisis of civilisation. The sociological reality of this utopia was provided by suburban lifestyle, the elevated reinterpretation of middle class existence. "Hence, American purism used European purism to serve its own end, which were of a perfect, cityless, endlessly suburban world, to which anyone could belong who possessed the following qualifications: (a) enough money to build his own house and to operate a car or two, and (b) the right colour (once the right religion, too, but that requirement largely passed by) to be allowed to build in the suburbs at all. If one was poor (of whom there were comparatively few in America) or black (there were about the same number), there was no room in the dreamworld for him."⁸⁷ Wright called this world *Usonian*—an acronym of United States of North America—the architecture of which was opposed to the unbalanced world of cities divorced from nature. "Or is the city only a persistent form of social disease eventuating in the fate all cities have met?" asked Wright, and as Venturi noted "It is one of the ironies of our century that Broadacre City corresponded more closely than any other form of radical urbanism to the central precepts of *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, advocating 'the gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the land.'"⁸⁸

The Guggenheim Museum building is ultimately an architectural denial of the urbanistic and architectural environment in which it is located. Wright did not take Madison or Lexington Avenue as partners and rejected any references to the existing museums in Central Park East; Central Park itself, the natural environment was the chosen partner instead. His contempt for the city where the collection is kept is manifested in his rejection of geometric shapes. Wright voiced his critique of functionalism on the occasion of the "Modern Archi-

⁸⁷ Vincent SCULLY, *American Architecture and Urbanism*. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1988, p. 173.

⁸⁸ Kenneth FRAMPTON, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*. 3rd edition, revised and enlarged, Thames and Hudson, London, 1994, p. 187.



“The spiral as the subject of the building”
Lobby inside the Guggenheim Museum, New York
Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright
Photo: Péter György, 2007

ecture: International Exhibition” organized by MoMA in 1932; he had previously, in 1928, alluded to this position in writing: “Negation is easy. Affirmation difficult. The negation dubbed—by the Museum of Modern Art—‘International Architecture’ could make no headway unless there were truth in my accusation: ‘more reflection of surface than substance.’ How pernicious the notion of ‘functionalism’ as a style! Why turn superficially to a style? The words ‘integral’, ‘organic’, ‘principle’—basic words concerning our ideal seem never to have occurred as necessary to such language as I have read trademarking that device. Yes, ‘device’—academic device at that—seeking to make a style when only style is needed. ‘No ornament’? That collateral fetish is the bastard begotten by intellectualists out of the dogma ‘Form follows function’, begotten because the abuse of a noble thing was mistaken for the thing itself. ‘Form follows function’ is but a statement of fact. When we say ‘Form and function are one’—only then do we take mere fact into the realm of creative thought. I should say that in that difference of statement lies the real difference between organic work, and that of the professed functionalists.”⁸⁹

The construction of the museum building took a very long time; it was finally opened to the public in 1959, after Hilla von Rebay had retired and Guggenheim and Wright had died at a venerable age. The museum was in the centre of heated debates from the moment it was inaugurated; the controversy focused on the utility of the building as a museum rather than on its incontestable architectural merit. The Guggenheim building can be seen either as a proof or a refutation of the issue of “form and function.” The undecidability of the dichotomy of “icon or institution,” the dialogue between the architect and the collection as equals, has become a Guggenheim tradition; and this path in turn led to Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Bilbao building.

Wright’s building shows no connection at all either with the tradition of 19th- to early 20th-century (classic style) museum architecture or with MoMA’s geometric modernness. Wright chose the spiral as the subject of his building—which gives way to numerous allusions to cultural history and evokes purest natural formations. The spiral had also featured in Wright’s earlier work. His designs for the Gordon Strong Automobile Objective in Maryland were completed in 1922. The de-

⁸⁹ *Frank Lloyd Wright Collected Writings, 1931–1939*. Vol 3. Ed. by Bruce Brooks PFEIFFER. Rizzoli, New York, p. 289.

signs, which were never built, followed the iconographic tradition of a gradually narrowing spiral, which was later literally turned upside down in Wright's Guggenheim designs. The interior structure of the building follows the shape of the exterior, with the result that the sight of the Guggenheim building and its interior are both compellingly strong architectural signals. Perhaps it does not even make sense to talk about interior design in this case, since the spatial sensation of the expanding and rising spiral is experienced from the outside as much as it is from the inside. While MoMA—in accord with the principles of the “white cube”—sought to create a neutral, invisible environment with every reconstruction, Wright followed a different model from the start. He created a home for the abstract painting in pursuit of spiritual renewal which is not simply on equal terms with it but also creates a complete and inescapable interpretation frame for it. Wright gently and elegantly followed MoMA's example in developing the path of entering the building from the street, and yet he created a space which cannot be ignored for a single moment. Not even for a minute does the Guggenheim leave the visitor alone with the artworks; and Wright's gentle but firm radicalism has been followed by several other designs, some of which are not so gentle. Museums which are the “products” of spectacle or symbol creating architecture all tread in Wright's footsteps, even if they have nothing to do with organic shapes. Wright's decision—in agreement with Hilla von Rebay's and Solomon R. Guggenheim's wishes—that spectators progressing upwards in the spiral were to discover the spaces and the lights of the building in parallel with the exhibits (that is, his raising his own work to the level of the artworks), does not display the kind of narcissism that inevitably comes to mind in connection with Frank Gehry's and Hans Hollein's museums. Wright believed that the unity of organic abstract art and architecture would be realised through complete fusion; in the unity of the collection and its architectural surroundings—a solution which offers an entirely novel quality in the experience of space and artwork. The equivalence of form and function represents the organic unity of artwork and building. Wright's edifice seems to preserve the central Pantheon-section of Schinkel's Altes Museum in Munich—without the “boxes” surrounding it. The primary function of the Pantheon reference, the rotunda in the Altes Museum, is not, however, the presentation of individual artworks; it is, instead, a means of attaining the immanent aesthetic perspective and experience held to be the essence of the museum. The Altes

Museum is a space patched together from architecture historical references; it displays the theoretical influence of Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand⁹⁰ in conforming to the formal requirements of both iconology and institution. The same tradition surfaces in the Washington National Gallery-East Building designed by I. M. Pei, and to some extent in the new MoMA: the exhibition rooms are reached through the agora of the museum, the open central hall drawing different floor levels into a single space—which occupies the position of 19th century stairways and monumental staircases.

The Guggenheim museum revoked this separation: it offers a single common space for all museum functions. Some considered the Guggenheim to be Wright's monument to himself rather than a functional museum; they were no doubt appeased by the extension designed by Gwathmey Siegel and built in 1992. There is now a minimalist modern building behind the spiral rotunda, which allows "white cube" style exhibitions to be duly displayed. Others, however, considered the Guggenheim to be an icon: they feel that Siegel's extension is an attack on the spirit of the place. The expansion does, incidentally, create the impression that the spirit of MoMA has quietly settled in the Guggenheim. The rotunda is now an architectural tourist attraction in itself, an immanent part of the cultural heritage, while the exhibitions are displayed in the rooms unpretentiously situated on the side.⁹¹ Since 1992, the Guggenheim has been a museum and an icon in one. The "functional" solutions have undoubtedly disrupted the spiritual unity of the building. Wright's work contains no references to cultural history, no ironic temporal seclusion; the original building remains within the wholeness of puritan Unitarian transcendentalism. The visitor walking along the spiral discovered picture and space together, but the moment the pictures were transferred to the neutral space of the "white cube," Wright's creation lost its original meaning.

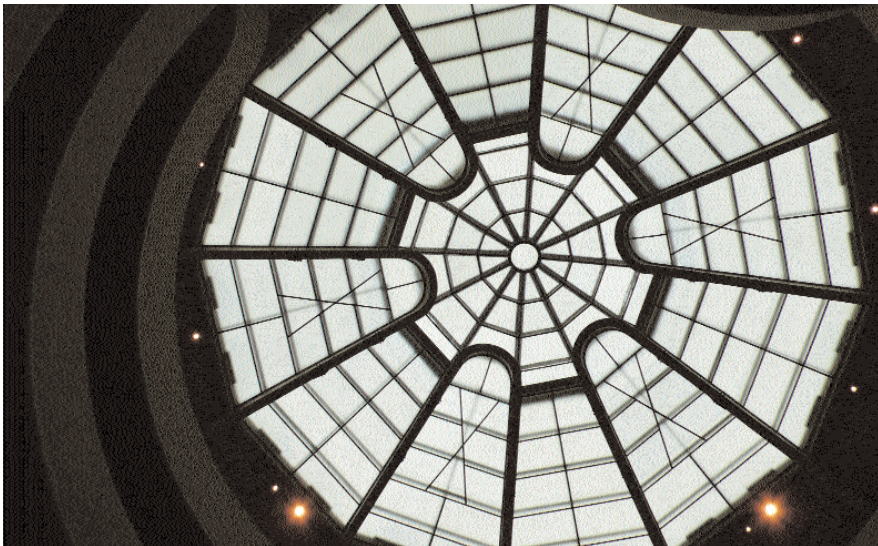
Its founders intended the Guggenheim to be a temple as opposed to a laboratory or clinic. MoMA offers the abstract experience of absorbing

⁹⁰ Jean-Nicolas-Louis DURAND, *Précis of the Lectures on Architecture*. Ed. by David BRITT. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, 2000.

⁹¹ This is not to mean that the traditional space of the Guggenheim does not continue to be a representative component of the exhibitions. Furthermore, there are artists who use the whole of the spiral as part of their artworks, as was done by Jenny Holzer, for instance, in 1989. Jenny HOLZER, *Untitled (Selections from Truisms, Inflammatory Essays, The Living Series, The Survival Series, Under a Rock, Laments, and Child Text)*, three colour L.E.D. display, 1989.



Interior view
Guggenheim Museum, New York
Photo: Péter György, 2007



Spiral rotunda
Guggenheim Museum, New York
Photo: Péter György, 2007

modern art as objectivity reigns in the society-free world of the white cube; Wright, on the other hand, created a Gesamtkunstwerk, the individuality of the spiritual experience enhanced by the space. Wright was a minimalist, which shows in this building as well; in contradiction with his successors, who saw him as the founder of sign and sculpture, or “signature,” architecture—rightly. Spatial reference to natural—non-historical—chronology remains a genuine artistic problem today. The two kinds of chronology: the divine, natural order and the man-made, historical order co-exist here. MoMA, like every white cube, was of course secluded from the city of New York, but the Guggenheim announced the unassailability of the exclusivity of human history, not only of the city: it evoked the sacred space and order of a temple. This minimalism has been manifest in recent years in artworks which stay away from the norms of spectaculum and deconstruction. The program and problem of representing the museum as an individualist, intimate and meditative space return in certain works by Shigeru Ban,⁹² Tadao Ando,⁹³ Peter Zumthor,⁹⁴ De Meuron and Herzog.⁹⁵

If there is an aesthetic experience in modern architecture which demonstrates the inseparability of the artwork and its space, it is that of the Guggenheim in New York. It is situated in a city and it rejects its own surroundings. It is a museum which is unsuited for admitting artworks deviating from this tradition; it can only admit works which enter into a dialogue with the space as a whole.

4. Transnational museum industry— the architecture of spectaculum

Thomas Krens, director of the Guggenheim, was interviewed in 1990 by Rosalind Krauss for her study on the cultural logic of the

⁹² Shigeru BAN, *Paper Museum*. Mishima, Shizuoka (Japan), 2002. Matilda McQUAID, *Shigeru Ban*. Phaidon, London, 2003.

⁹³ Tadao ANDO, Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts. St.Louis, Missouri, 2001, and Chichu Art Museum, Naoshima (Kagawa, Japan), 2004. *Museums in the 21st Century. Concepts, Projects, Buildings*. Ed. by Suzanne GREUB-Thierry GREUB. Prestel, Munich–London, 2006.

⁹⁴ Peter ZUMTHOR, *Atmospheres. Architectural environments, surrounding objects*. Birkhäuser, Basel, 2006.

⁹⁵ HERZOG–De MEURON, *Natural History*. Ed. by Philip URSPRUNG. Lars Müller Publishers, New York, 2003.

museum of late capitalism. She asked Krens about the new era of museums. “Thus, what was revealed to him was not only the tinyness and inadequacy of most museums, but that the encyclopaedic nature of the museum was ‘over.’ What museums must now do, he said he realised, was to select a very few artists from the vast array of modernist aesthetic production and to collect and show these few in depth over the full amount of space it might take to really experience the cumulative impact of a given oeuvre. The discursive change he was imagining is, we might say, one that switches from diachrony to synchrony. The encyclopaedic museum is intent on telling story, by arraying before its visitor a particular version of the history of art. The synchronic museum—if we can call it that—would forego history in the name of a kind of intensity of experience, an aesthetic charge that is not so much temporal (historical) as it is now radically spatial.”⁹⁶

Krens’s museum ideal has close ties with the Guggenheim Museum tradition created by Wright, and looking back from 2007, it is clear that the turn that took place in contemporary museum architecture, to which he made his contribution, has led to a strong emphasis on radical spatial experiences. The 19th-century classic museum age was the period of creating great encyclopaedic collections; the second “museum boom” currently taking place is, in contrast, a revolution of museum *architecture* and a shift in the cultural function of the institution. The 19th century established one of the basic—and to some extent abstract—institutions of modern society, while present day museum architecture focuses on redefining urbanist contexts. The classic museum age showed several correspondences with the classification mechanisms of archives described by Foucault on a number of occasions: the collections and the institutions of supervision, the formations representing power relations, the norms and forms of discursivity evolve at the same time.⁹⁷ The contemporary “museum boom” conforms to a different ambience of intellect and powers—and also has the ability to shape it. The museum today is not solely a spatial narrative created in accordance with scientific standards; neither is it a machinery meant to present the autonomy of the aesthetic experience.

⁹⁶ Rosalind KRAUSS, *The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum*. In *October*, Vol. 54, 1990/Fall, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Tony BENNETT, *The Birth of the Museum. History, Theory, Politics*. Routledge, London–New York, 1995; and E. HOOPER-GREENHILL, *Museums and Shaping of Knowledge*. Routledge, London–New York, 1992.

It is, instead, a distinguished institution of the metamorphosis of cultural hierarchy, where it is not an illusion of permanence, the false security of the unassailability of taxonomy that is offered to the visitors, but the opportunity to master the interpretation techniques of reflection on change. When and where can a structure be regarded as a culture? What social conditions must it be associated with and what practices must it be composed of to qualify as a culture? Where do the boundaries of natural collections lie and where does art start? What sort of aesthetic universalism is in operation behind museum machineries? Or is there one in operation at all? The audience in a contemporary museum could well be a partner in professing undisguised embarrassment. Spectacle architecture is especially suited to not disguising epistemological embarrassment—but admitting it in an entertaining way. Thus, whatever we may think of the museum industry fever of the megalomaniac Krens's "McGuggenheim-franchise," it undoubtedly plays an unignorable role in the development of the museum turn.

It was in 1990 that Krens started the utopistic expansion which resulted in several Guggenheim museum designs intended to be built worldwide; some were built, many remained plans. The Guggenheim Bilbao is among the former group; it is in several respects a globally influential, mythic example of the kind of museum architecture Krens prognosticated. In evaluating it, we should consider the myth of cultural history which we now witness in economics, critical sociology analysing global capitalism as well as in the literature on urbanism and architecture. (I did not omit art history and museology by mistake: they suffered the story of the Guggenheim Bilbao rather than shaped it.) Krens's transnational, global museum philosophy, the standards of spectacularity, is not restricted to historical narration expressed in the language of space or to the characteristic aesthetic and existential experience created by the space, but extends to the American cultural presence which has radically intensified since the nineties; it is closely related to the phenomenon that the 2006 Venice Biennale labelled the "age of global urban transformation." In MoMA's image of global modernity, the uniqueness of the museum and its ties with New York—discounting a moderately successful exhibition in 1937 in Washington⁹⁸ and

⁹⁸ Jesús-Pedro LORENTE, MoMA goes to Washington. In *Museum International*, Vol. 51, No. 4, 1999, pp. 53–59.

Nelson Rockefeller's franchise attempt in Brazil after World War II⁹⁹—are permanent factors; a self-evidence which could not be questioned even when the War was over. MoMA's future—similarly to that of every traditional museum—is dependent on the future of the city where it is located. When the spirit of modernity settled in New York, the *genius loci* was to the museum's advantage; and when in the age of contemporary art past the period of modernity—especially after September 11th, 2001—this spirit seemed to be departing from the city, the museum was again affected. As Serge Guilbaut writes in his volume on the Guggenheim Bilbao, "The post-Cold War world has, to some degree, at least on the surface, led to changing roles and strategies in the large Western museums. The multiplication of cultural sites from which artists can now speak, the diversity of cultural production being seen, the competition among voices in a world that Paul Virilio calls the 'Babelian supérieur,' defines a cultural landscape that has been, during the last few years, unrecognizable and not easily acceptable to MOMA."¹⁰⁰

Krens's franchise philosophy says no to the individuality of the collection offered by the local context of the museum and, consequently, to its embeddedness in New York; the transnational American museum has stepped out into the global media space where various memorial institutions had little to do up till now. The respective legitimisation processes of the two museums—MoMA and the Guggenheim—only share the indubitability of the equivalence of modernisation and Americanisation, but they differ in their methods of representing cultural hegemony. MoMA was founded with reference to the traditional view of the political and cultural hegemony of the United States, while the "McGuggenheim" system rests on a critical interpretation of and a forced shift in this stance. It may not be an exaggeration to claim that MoMA is one of the great institutions of the cultural cold war, while the system developed by Krens rests on an appreciation of the multi-lateral world, on the hope of maintaining a presence.

It is not the basic values of Americanisation/modernisation that Krens criticises but their methods. The franchise system appears to be

⁹⁹ Serge GUILBAUT, *Sleeping in Bilbao. The Guggenheim as a New Cultural Edsel?* In *Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim*. Ed. by Anna Maria GUASCH, Joseba ZULAIKA. University of Nevada Press, Reno, 2005, pp. 133–147.

¹⁰⁰ Serge GUILBAUT, *Op. cit.*, p. 137.

more efficient than MoMA's location-bound, traditional advantage in the geopolitical situation that emerged after 1989. The Guggenheim strategy compares to the highly successful Starbucks chain in this respect. This global chain materialising a spatial blend of a fast food restaurant and a coffee shop appears in striking cultural and commercial spaces. We may find it by the Burg, opposite the Hotel Sacher down Kärntnerstrasse in Vienna, near the Cluny Museum on the Boulevard St. Michel in Paris and on the corner of Englisches Garten in Munich. The blend of cultural and urban contexts, lifestyles, institutions, customs and languages in these spaces provides a vivid example of the evolution of the globalised media space—and this is the key issue for the future of the “McGuggenheim.”

When Guggenheim appears as a brand name¹⁰¹—and Krens is known to have meant it in a literal sense: he entered into negotiations in Bilbao on condition that the 20 million dollar fee was paid without delay—we witness an endeavour to construct a cultural institution network where the deal is about the local authenticity of the virtual global media space. It is not primarily artworks that the Guggenheim supplies to the institutions joining the chain, but “guggenheimism,” the experience expressed in the name, which is based on the recognition of the need for a museum and on the precise analysis of its economic and political motivations. While the 19th-century fever of museum foundation was primarily driven by higher political interests and spurred by a need for institutions of systematic cultural representation, the current boom is motivated by local, regional economic interests. By creating the great public institutions of political representation, a conceptual framework of universal cultural heritage was also developed and dearly valued treasures of art were transferred in the process to the great cities, mostly capital cities, in Europe and, later, in the United States. The museum age began with the making of the great collections, with the result that a wide variety of cultural legacies ended up a long way from the place of their origins. This process raised several questions. For reasons to do with art philosophical considerations, Alexander Lenoir¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ James B. TWITCHELL, *Branded Nation. The Marketing of Megachurch, College Inc., and Museumworld*. Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, New York, 2004.

¹⁰² Dominique POULOT, Alexandre Lenoir et les musées des monuments français. In *Les lieux de mémoire. La Nation*. Vol. II, Ed. by Pierre NORA. Gallimard, Paris, 1986, pp. 497–532; Andrew McCLELLAN: Alexander Lenoir and the Museum of French Monuments. In: *Inventing the Louvre*. Op. cit. pp. 155–198.

decided that the original contexts of the artworks were to be preserved, and when modern museums follow the principles of historical reconstruction—using the “Epochenraum” or the extended narrative method—from a temporal and spatial distance, they in effect create a virtual illusion of them. The issue of the right to collect—in a philosophical as well as in a literal sense—was raised around the same time. The story of the Elgin Marbles still endures as a myth of key significance bearing on every museum and cultural restitution.¹⁰³ It is a fact of social history, independently of how the genealogy of the collections created in the museum age are judged, that the history of the cultural spaces of European and American modern societies is related to the existence of universal museums. By the end of the 20th century, however, the situation had fundamentally changed with respect to the museums. The resources which had been available in the 19th century were either depleted or—due to cultural relativism and post-colonialism—became inaccessible: and the artworks lost their “mobility.” When after decidedly sharp exchanges, the Musée du quai Branly, designed by Jean Nouvel, was finally opened in 2006 in Paris, its collection—which introduces non-European civilisations—was put together from works from various ethnological museums, such as the Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (MAAO), and from the Musée de l’Homme, which so to speak represents the inadmissible tradition of colonialism and which is in a genuinely poor condition.¹⁰⁴ The current “museum boom” is therefore not about establishing great collections but about rearranging existing ones and ways of presenting them, that is, about museum architecture. The inaccessibility of the great collections, the great enigmatic artworks, has had a number of consequences. Cities with interests in the museum industry—and in possession of buildings of universal significance—are compelled to organise major travelling exhibitions in order to arouse the interest of audiences. The situation has further led to an unprecedented rise in the value of contemporary art and collections: this remained the only accessible resource for new institutions. And finally: a spectacle must

¹⁰³ We cannot discuss here the story of the Elgin Marbles or the associated literature; the interested reader’s attention is directed to only one of the latest developments. Dorothy KING, *The Elgin Marbles. The Story of the Parthenon and Archaeology’s Greatest Controversy*. Hutchinson, London, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Sarah AMATO, Quai Branly museum: representing France after empire. In *Race and Class*. Vol. 47, No. 4, 2006, pp. 46–65.

be created, buildings and architectural environments which are attractive for the tourist industry and which are capable of compensating for the absence of great collections. As the chances of acquiring great artworks diminished, so grew the interest in buildings: the new museums of the 21st century often gain their reputation through their architects rather than their collections.

Krens drew his conclusions and assessed the difference between museums created for reasons to do with bureaucracy and power and the establishments to be created under current market conditions.

By 1990, Krens was over the collapse of MASS MoCA—the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art—and the failure of the Salzburg Guggenheim project, the designs of which were commissioned from Hans Hollein; he was already considering plans for the Museum Guggenheim Dogana (to be built by converting the old customs house) in Venice, which was finally irrevocably removed from the agenda in 1999. As Joseba Zulaika writes, “World cities were for Krens what women are for Don Juan: useful accessories to satisfy his fantasies of power and conquest. Boston, Venice, Salzburg, Vienna, Graz, Osaka, Tokyo, Moscow ... were among the cities associated with a potential ‘McGuggenheim’, as New York’s press baptized them insidiously.”¹⁰⁵ The failures meant that from 1991 onwards Bilbao had to do a lot and endure a lot to achieve what Krens had promised and what it was finally granted: it was put on the cultural map created and controlled in the global media space. Zulaika’s metaphor of the seducer adeptly depicts further details of the relationship between the New York cosmopolitan and the regional Bilbao; and given that Krens, who has since been compelled to abandon his directorship and is now president of the museum trust, has most recently conquered Abu Dhabi, the metaphor does not appear to be an exaggeration. Frank Gehry has been commissioned to design the museum building to be constructed on the currently uninhabited Saadiyat Island, beside the future Louvre building designed by Jean Nouvel and another building designed by Tadao Ando and Zaha Hadid.¹⁰⁶ Gehry also made the designs for the Guggen-

¹⁰⁵ Joseba ZULAIKA, *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁶ Only the first sketches of the cultural “centre” to be built on Saadiya Island in the spring of 2007 are known at present. Any kind of judgement would therefore be premature. I *suspect*, however, that the project, which envisages three museums and an opera and concert hall to be designed by star architects, has the potential to effect a certain degree of change in the institutional tradition of the museum inherited from the 19th century as well as in

heim Lower Manhattan between 1998 and 2000, which could not be built due to lack of funding.

The communication breakthrough envisioned by Krens could not have been fully successful without the architectural merit of Gehry's Bilbao museum. Gehry's work—which Mark C. Taylor believes can be interpreted as a philosophical metaphor of complexity—satisfied the requirements of a successful appearance in the global media space and maintained the attention it had first earned for several years. Gehry created a striking architectural curiosity, he crossed the borders of tradition and presented a new architectural dimension. Krens always worked in close co-operation with Gehry and set two (in part contradictory) requirements; first, he envisaged a radically unique and provocatively new architectural sculpture which departs from the current consensus in architecture and crosses its borders; and second, he expected some kind of rational minimum, although he did not quite have the “white cube” in mind. Spatial structures designed with the pre-selected artworks in mind tend to present a serious risk for sculpture buildings, which is aptly illustrated by Hans Hollein's Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt (1987). This problem makes it difficult to rearrange permanent exhibitions and control re-canonisation, the latter of which is one of the essential functions of museums created in the age of modernity. Hollein's building is also an illustration of the awkwardness and bleakness of a rapidly receding, ephemeral museum that gives in to momentary fashions.

Gehry's unusual radicalism successfully avoided this trap—so the years that have passed have proved. While Hollein stayed within the standard boundaries of postmodernism—and thus can be compared to historical trends—, Gehry, once again, created an unidentifiable building. Unusual radicalism it is, because while the formal structuring of the building is stretched beyond limits, it is perfectly neutral with respect to any political or cultural iconography and tradition. Gehry speaks with striking naivety of the shape of the fish popular in the Basque Country in connection with the Bilbao Guggenheim and of the flower metaphor in connection with the atrium.¹⁰⁷

the meaning of this tradition. An event of a country which did not have a museum in the world order that evolved in the age of colonialism demanding its share of the fever of museum foundation constitutes a notable change.

¹⁰⁷ Coosje van BRUGGEN, Frank O. GEHRY, *Guggenheim Museum Bilbao*. Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, 1997.

The building is consonant with the peculiar infantilism of the “Californian Ideology,” the political pseudo credos of the “virtual class,” described and critically analysed by Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron. “The Californian Ideology, therefore, simultaneously reflects the disciplines of market economics and the freedoms of hippie artisanship. This bizarre hybrid is only made possible through a nearly universal belief in technological determinism. Ever since the ’60s, liberals—in the social sense of the word—have hoped that the new information technologies would realise their ideals.”¹⁰⁸ Gehry’s building is without doubt an authentic place for the members of the “virtual class.” If by “virtual class” Barbrook meant postmodernists with a share in high-tech utopism, who maintain that technological progress is an appropriate tool not only to ease social conflicts but also to guide social existence, Gehry made the right decision when he chose them—the pseudo-bohemian upper-middle class travellers, the millions of “museum tourists”—as his target audience.

The “Grand Tours” of the 18th century had the objective to visit the remains of antiquity, to embark on an adventure of discovering authentic sites; in the 19th century, the targets were global metropolises and the famous museums in cities aspiring to renown. And it is that which matters most to Bilbao: the museum strives to raise the city and the region from its disadvantaged economic position. Bilbao had previously sought a solution among the ruins of the industrial age and only Gehry’s building allowed it to move on to the age of post-industrialism. The giant abstract spectacle covered in titanium satisfied the requirements of “visitability”—to use Bella Dicks’s term. Dicks points out that the franchise system, the meaning of “MacCities” always depends on the specific context.” Global styles may also represent a conscious strategy of self-differentiation in relation to neighbouring competitors, as in Bilbao’s agreeing to become the site of the new American Guggenheim Foundation museum, which allowed the Basque city to differentiate itself from wider Hispanic culture.”¹⁰⁹

Over the past decade and a half, Krens has invited virtually every major contemporary star architect to contribute to the—sometimes

¹⁰⁸ Richard BARBROOK, Andy CAMERON, *The Californian Ideology*. In *Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates and Pirate Utopias*. Ed. by Peter LUDLOW. The MIT Press, Cambridge (Massachusetts), 2001, p. 367.

¹⁰⁹ Bella DICKS, *Culture on Display. The Production of Contemporary Visitability*. Open University Press, London, 2003, pp. 81–82.

unrealised—designs of one or another of his museum projects. Rem Koolhaas designed the Guggenheim Las Vegas in 2001 and has also worked on the designs of the Guggenheim Hermitage Museum. The design proposal of the museum intended to be built in Tokyo was prepared by Zaha Hadid, Shigeru Ban and Jean Nouvel in 2001. Nouvel further designed an underwater building for the Guggenheim in Rio de Janeiro, which turned out to be so disastrously expensive, however, that the city leadership finally decided not to go ahead with the implementation.¹¹⁰

The Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, for instance, seems to be a parody of compulsive repetition neurosis rather than an intercultural breakthrough. The American Guggenheim museum in Abu Dhabi gives the impression of an Islamic–American cultural dialogue and does not show much affinity with the political and social reality characterising the region; added to that, it irritates those who find the excessive powers of the United States alarming.

To understand the position of contemporary museums we should consider an interconnection network of a scale far larger than the Guggenheim phenomenon, one that affects the future of the museum as a cultural establishment: the development of the concept and experience of the modern city over the two museum ages.

The great universal museums of the 18th and 19th centuries were created in accordance with the decision making mechanisms of national cultures, but clearly as a result of political decisions,¹¹¹ mostly in the capital cities of the emerging nation states. Nation states have by now lost their former significance; borders have acquired a different meaning in the economic, political and cultural exchange processes of global capitalism. As the closed universes opened, the meaning and significance of capital cities also underwent changes, with special reference to global cities with economic-political foundations which have little to do with the culture of regional micro-worlds. The restructuring of megapolises evidently alters the cultural context of the museums. Global cities are no longer the representatives of the nation state; their significance and economic powers come from their partici-

¹¹⁰ *The Guggenheim Architecture*. Exhibition, Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, September 26th–November 12th, 2006.

¹¹¹ James J. SHEENAN, *Museums in the German Art world. From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 72; David M. WILSON, *The British Museum. A History*. The British Museum Press, London, 2002.

pation in the market rather than from the state. The shift in the nature of the relationship between the place and its meaning is a great and inevitable lesson of modernity. As space–time relations were restructured, distances diminished and became virtualised, the meaning of the milieu changed as well.¹¹² Symbolic spaces are at least as virtual today as they are physical; there is a free path between mediated realities and realities composed of traditional architectural elements. The separation of the milieu from the locality is one of those sociological shifts determining aesthetic experiences which underlie the motivations behind the foundation of the museums of late modernity. The *hardware* spaces designed by the architects and the *software* created by the cultural communities—the planned spaces and the Soft City¹¹³—are partners in an ongoing dialogue, albeit the signals, the “speech acts” of the dialogue are invisible in a framework defined in terms of a traditional structure of space and time. Bernard Lepetit reminds us that attention should be paid to the historical and economic causes of the changes of scale, as well as to their philosophical and aesthetic consequences.¹¹⁴ The transformation of urban systems from frameworks to networks started in the 19th century; the spectacle, the theatrical spectacle, of the “extended milieu” and the modern city is not a novel property of recent decades. The Soft City, the world of interactive spaces and “urban screens,” demands a change of scale. The choice of scale in the analysis of spaces is an especially sensitive issue when city culture is concerned. The choice constitutes a cultural decision over what is made visible and what is banished to the realm of invisibility through the representation machinery. The visual method allowing the connections between global cities to be interpreted—that is, the scale of the map—almost automatically makes all those places invisible which have been left out of the brave new world of dense networks. It is also evident that these forsaken places are not so much geographically as culturally separated from the transnational cultural exchanges of global cities; they are often located physically within nearby spatial structures which are margi-

¹¹² Jörg DÜRRSCHMIDT, *Everyday Lives in the Global City. The delinking of locale and milieu*. Routledge, London–New York, 2000.

¹¹³ Jonathan RABAN, *Soft City*. Harvill Press, London, 1998.

¹¹⁴ Bernard LEPETIT, Architecture, géographie, histoire: usages de l'échelle, in *Genèses*, 1993 Autumn, pp. 118–138; and Bernard LEPETIT, *The pre-industrial urban system. France 1740–1840*. Trans. by Godfrey ROGERS. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge–London, 1994.

nalised at the level of symbolic representation. It is an open question how homogenous cultural settings and symbolic cultural institutions relying on (and generating) the milieu adapt to the continually changing life and fast pace of the “screen city,” where architecture must conform to the rhythm dictated by communication, traffic and cultural exchanges, because if it does not, the building itself will become invisible. Cultural spaces have been overtaken by the virtual milieu of the symbolic spaces created by the global media systems—a challenge to which museums react in different ways.

There are an increasing number of emigrants and migrants among the inhabitants of global, transnational cities, there is an increasingly strong parallel presence of different cultures, religions, customs and languages. These megapolises, however, are *not* the melting pots of modernism; the shared physical space no longer forces cultural exchanges, the assimilation of the second generation of the time. The virtual, place-independent milieu allows the individual communities to follow their respective religious and cultural norms generation after generation, and lets them avoid a dialogue with people with whom they physically share a living space. Sections of the diverse religious communities living in London or Berlin keep their distance from the culture of the “others” living in the city as much as Orthodox Jewish communities do in New York, Montreal or Budapest. The cultural canon of the given place, nation or nation state often remains invisible or else incomprehensible for the city population of the age of globalisation. The cultural institution system which used to make universal canons comprehensible and liveable for local people is now seriously damaged.

The divergent urban cultural spatial structures which emerged in a single physical space, the virtual cities of imaginary communities live side by side, and this co-habitation is often fraught with tensions. The question is, in what way a system develops where cultural places enter into different types of dialogue with each other in their shared physical space, and in what way contemporary megapolises avoid the negative utopia of the impenetrable, aggression-minded strongholds of secluded enclaves. Various combinations of capital concentrations reign over the cities in place of the laws of the nation state. The political elite of the 19th century employed design and canon to keep the various forms of city use under control, they chose a scale that allowed cultural differences to be seen; in the 21st century, the tools of power

are defined by the interests of the global economy—and nothing else. Consequently, the features of a 21st-century urban image are likely to deviate radically from the urban norms of the 19th century. On the one hand, a high-tech, or state-of-the-art, architectural environment has emerged, which is in close connection with the present state of the domains of consumption, communication and business. These are the “non-lieux”—to use Marc Auge’s phrase—or pseudo places, where the *genius loci* bears no meaning. The European tradition of a correspondence between place and meaning now tends to hold for a stage of urban development; it is not suitable for the interpretation of contemporary phenomena. On the other hand, the same urban spaces are homes to emerging subcultures often held to be aggressive, which shape their social environment with the help of low-tech methods, and which are sometimes invisible and at other times uninterpretable for established institutions. The cultural practices of these—in the language of sociology, marginal—groups, such as street art, stencil and the impromptu, nomadic architecture of the homeless, are rarely looked upon as *partners* by those living in the world of high tech.

The impact of telecommunications (“no sense of place”) on urban spaces is at least twofold. First, the networks based on digital culture have given rise to hitherto unknown forms of virtual presence, or “telepresence,” and second, that does not mean that distance is virtualised: the number of people choosing to live in dense settings, in urban environments steadily increases. The architecture of the “no sense of place” creates an urban environment which is continuous and substitutable almost everywhere in the global cities. In contrast to railway stations, the great ventures of the 19th century with ever so important roles in the spatial structures of towns and cities, airports do not affect the traditional space grid. Although different railway stations may show several similarities in style, their architectures are always adjusted to the specific urban fabric, since that is where they are located. Airports, in contrast, are with few exceptions, always logistic centres, which are chiefly cognate with one another rather than with the given city. A similar situation holds for the architecture of shopping centres and offices—and it is a valid question to ask whether this constitutes a victory for the International Style held in great esteem by Philip Johnson and Barr or far more than that. The analogue and exclusivity of Americanisation and modernisation has long ceased to be valid; the “no sense of place” describes and has brought

about an urban state, not simply separate buildings, not only architecture. The neutral high tech exists in parallel—often with no urban transition but along decidedly sharp boundaries—with the architectural social reality of megapolises, which is poorly understood by the traditional architectural approach. It is about the social reality of dire poverty and the consequences of population density, about urban sights which bear a resemblance to phenomena familiar from 19th-century development, but have a different scale. The existence of housing estates leads to hitherto unknown cultural problems in global cities with 8 or 10 or 20 million inhabitants.

The two extremes have something in common, which can be interpreted with reference to the concept of temporary or “terminal architecture.” “High and low”: the “utility period” of architecture is considerably shorter at the top end and at the bottom end than it was in the 19th century. The depreciation and continual renewal of urban spatial structures and the loss of content in the frame of norms and forms behind permanence are especially sensitive issues for museums. The perpetual metamorphosis of urban spaces evidently involves shifts in the values of the urbanist features which have developed in accordance with standards which are independent of market trends. For this reason, there has been an increasingly heavy emphasis on the musealisation and preservation of traditional cityscapes in the late modern cities of *temporariness*. Cities with traditional spatial configurations which value the spatial archaeological structure of historical time are in an especially difficult position. The preservation of the spirit of the place is similarly motivated by powerful political and cultural interests in urbanist environments determined by the “no sense of place,” temporary logistics and economics. The historical town centres, the various segments of urban pasts have become living museums in the new context. Our experience of the best of 19th-century everyday architecture has long been limited to various reproductions and photographs; we witness the remaining architectural environment being musealised as a national cultural heritage. The city-museum is contrasted with the global economic contexts—co-operating with it in a best-case scenario. The city-museum is the literal realisation of Patrick Geddes’s “Biopolis” and Wright’s utopian suburban development, the “Broadacre City.” Leon Krier’s Poundbury in England and the city Celebration near Disneyland in Florida stand for the culture of this nostalgia-historicity, the representation of permanence as kitsch, the

parody of the restored relations between place and meaning. Living open air museums.

We know that the universal collections—Hermitage, Prado, Louvre, British Museum, Museum Insel, Metropolitan—are located in St Petersburg, Madrid, Paris, London, Berlin and New York; in cities which continue to play leading roles in global culture. But it is becoming more and more obvious that they belong to the elite of an affluent and aging world, they are more and more museum-like themselves and can no longer adequately fulfil all the functions they assumed when they were established. The cities of Europe and North America are steadily losing their role as cultural models reaching beyond geographical borders. While the museums of the 19th century were positioned on the continents with leading roles in the cultural order of colonialism and thus it was self-evident where universal collections were to be kept, this does not hold for the 21st century. Museum culture exists through museum *architecture* in contemporary cities, its urban contexts are dramatically different and thus incomparable to the European cultural spaces of the 19th century. The megapolises of the globalised world do not recognise the dominance of European politics and culture or the European hegemony that created the encyclopaedic collections, and thus the institution of the museum faces hitherto unknown cultural dialogues. The colonial models of museum culture are of little use in the cities of Bangkok, Beijing, Bogota, Cairo, Caracas, Delhi, Jakarta, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Johannesburg, Karachi, Lima, Mexico City, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, Tehran or Tokyo. The world order of colonialism, where the classification standards of universal collections were also acceptable to non-European regions, has come to an end. It is also clear that the city museums of the present and the near future may only show limited resemblance to the establishments of the “museum age.”

Museums, as they are understood in the European sense, created an architectural frame around documents from various natural, social and art historical eras in the name of permanence. Their visitors found isolated pieces rescued from decaying pasts in their exhibition rooms. Since these pieces—stones, pictures, sculptures—were lifted out of the silent stream of tracelessly vanishing ages, the buildings guarding them have naturally become part of everlasting timelessness, similarly to their contents. The Pantheon and other buildings preserving the memory of culture were meant to resist decay and time. This state

of liberation from their contexts may be realised in a number of distinct styles: in most cases the interpretation frame function of the building was achieved with the help of Greek and Roman architectural models. The distinguished status—or, if you like, the unquestionable solemnity—of museums in the cultural space networks of modernity was a self-evident fact for the majority of the city population.

But what does the association with historicity mean for the millions of migrants and emigrants? Does the 19th-century museum system offer an experience of familiar comfort or discovery to them?

Could *that* be the reason why Krens chose such a radical solution in taking Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim to create a museum *building* which had nothing to do with either regional features or the spirit of historicity? (It is another question that Krens himself would have liked to find a symbol to stand for the spirit of Bilbao. This is why he tried—unsuccessfully—to arrange for Guernica to be kept permanently in the Guggenheim Bilbao when it was returned to Spain from MoMA.) Could this building be so very important because it has nothing to do with the spirit of the place? (Similarly precious and spectacular buildings are a rare occurrence in the framework of “terminal architecture”...)

Shigeru Ban's excellent Nomadic Museum comes to mind here. Ban always emphasises the relationship of the building with time and with materials and this particular building is a gentle but uncompromising critique of the museum architecture of spectacularity and of “terminal architecture.” The shaping of the Nomadic Museum evokes an image of the archetypal hut; the entire structure is supported by *paper columns*. A grid of stacked industrial containers is substituted for the museum walls—in a gentle and sophisticated allusion to the great controversy of modern architecture over the necessity or redundancy of a facade. The Nomadic Museum is composed of temporary materials and containers, the “bricks” of global cargo-architecture. Placing containers in a museum context is a radical step in itself; the power of Ban's work lies in its avoidance of spectacularity while the effectiveness of the created sight is preserved. The resulting construction is in fact infinitely beautiful. The geometric minimalism and repetitive rhythm of the container wall, the arrhythmic variation in the colour of the containers, the rhythm of the gaps, the “windows,” are as striking as the sight of the paper column structures. The Nomadic Museum can be dismantled and reassembled anywhere;

it was seen in New York a few years ago, and most recently in Santa Cruz. It was set up embedded in one of the original contexts of the containers, in the storage section or, to use a current word, the logistic centre of industrial ports in both cities, surrounded by “coastal scenery.” The building answers the question of museums without collections and spirit of the place in precisely the opposite way from the Guggenheim Bilbao. Where Gehry creates a pragmatic exemplar of spectacle architecture with narcissistic pleasure, Ban cautions against redundancy: “less is more.” Also, while Gehry’s building is uninterpretable without its urban context, Ban’s buildings keep their distance from the city, that is, they warn of the danger of the museum losing its meaning.

The institution of the museum is *an unintended memorial to a place which possesses meaning*. The paradox of the second museum age—the contemporary museum boom—consists in precisely this phenomenon: festive buildings located in a network of meaningless yet symbolic cultural spaces and carrying the spirit of the virtual milieu.

The option personified by Gehry is one possible trend: the architecture of spectacularity, Expressionism. Several museums of this kind have been opened in recent years; buildings which satisfy the economic requirements and help increase the popularity of their cities as travel destinations. The boom in museum *architecture* offers the opportunity of catching up with the trend to cities with collections which may not be of universal significance but are important in that they draw our attention to numerous local cultural treasures. This stream contains incontestable masterpieces of plastic art as well as theatrical solutions likely to lose their value quickly. We ought to distinguish buildings showing talent but bowing to the fashion of spectacularity according to the quality of the experience offered by their spaces. The architecture of spectacularity is a proof of the change of scale in global culture—the leaders of the cities which invested more than a little money in these buildings are well aware of this fact. Because they recognise that there is a need to conform to the traditional scale in parallel with a need to comply with the scale of the global media space.

The archetype of museums becoming city spectacles is undoubtedly Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers’s by now legendary work, the Beaubourg, The Pompidou Centre inaugurated in 1978. The Pompidou Centre attempted to disrupt hegemony in a number of aspects and to mark the place of Paris on the cultural map of a new era. “The most

basic intention behind the design of the Pompidou Centre was to define a new relationship with culture. No longer elitist, culture was to come off its pedestal and enter the mainstream of life. Instead of being shut away in a temple- or mausoleum-like building, it was to be presented in a new sort of public forum, a bazaar of intense interaction between people and the arts.”¹¹⁵ The Pompidou Centre is a traditional museum with a significant modern collection on the one hand, and a cultural meeting place, a scene of the incessant city fiesta on the other; it is visited by many people who come to see and use the film and book library, the restaurant, the cafe, the lookout platforms, the futuristic escalators but not the collections. The building itself is a real farce: a sarcastic rendering of the machine-architecture of Modernism, an exposition of functionalism as an absurd sight. Piano and Rogers did not so much mock the presentation principles of the “white cube” but rather the entire myth of the inaccessibility and elevatedness of modern high culture. “The Piano–Rogers proposal was, as we can see, iconoclastic in the lowest as well as the highest sense. By keeping this transparent, flexible, and welcoming space open late into the evening and filling it with life, food, and drink, as well as books, art, film, and lectures.”¹¹⁶

The spirit of Expressionist sculpture architecture is rendered by artists such as Daniel Libeskind, Zaha Hadid and Coop Himmelb(l)au besides Gehry. In Libeskind’s work, museum and memorial architecture receives a far greater emphasis than is usual. The Jewish Museum in Berlin (1989–1999), the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester (1997–2002) and the Danish Jewish Museum (2004) are unique examples of contemporary Expressionist museum architecture. Gehry’s sculpture architecture is based on a reinterpretation of the by then empty tradition of the artwork-space relationship taken so seriously by Wright, on a process where the urban context of the museum building is neutral and the building itself flaunts the magnificence of meaninglessness. In Libeskind’s museums, in contrast, the spirit of the place is unavoidable and unique. The Jewish Museum of Berlin gains its very meaning from the *vanished* spirit of the place, the

¹¹⁵ Peter BUCHANAN, *Renzo Piano Building Workshop. Complete works*. Vol. 1. Phaidon, London, 1993, p. 52.

¹¹⁶ Douglas DAVIES, *The Museum Transformed. Design and Culture in the Post-Pompidou Age*. Abbaville Press Publishers, New York, 1990, p. 41.

empty space. This building cannot be in any other place. The museum¹¹⁷ is the rare exception where seclusion, inaccessibility, fragmentariness, the alternation of bright beams of light and dim spots of shadow make up a closed whole in the barren land of homelessness. Libeskind's work is in general characterised by the use of space to represent tales that can no longer be told: be it the Holocaust or the Second World War in general, as can be seen in the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester.

A second representative of Expressionist architecture with a talent comparable to Libeskind's dramatic strength is the Baghdad born architect Zaha Hadid. What deconstruction means to her is the self-explanatory use of the ruins of modernity. Hadid does not only depart to a dramatic extent from the urban grid, reminders of which appear again and again in the shapes which have become her truly unmistakable signatures, but also alludes to the existential isolation of architecture itself. Among the alternatives of terminal architecture, Hadid's open and yet infinitely glum structures are determined and desperate witnesses to the age in which they were created. The association with Deconstructivism is justified for both Libeskind and Hadid, since homelessness and the disruption of the self-evidence offered by the space are key elements in their works. "The relationship between deconstruction, the architectonic and architecture takes place within a specific philosophical practice and philosophical thinking. A fundamental element of both is the refusal to allow either any conventional and thereby 'naturalising' conception of either philosophy or architecture to dominate or provide the end—or home—for such an investigation. In relation to architecture this can begin with the attempt to break the automatic link between architecture and habitation."¹¹⁸

Hadid's Contemporary Arts Centre, Cincinnati, built in 2004, and the MAXXI—Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, completed in 2007 in Rome are especially magnificent urban structures with hard-to-define, coalescent spaces. As Hadid described them in an interview, "This idea of a series of levels is connected to my initial interest in geological formations and geology. I think that if these analogies are

¹¹⁷ See the chapters on the Jewish Museum and on Mauthausen in this volume for more details.

¹¹⁸ Andrew BENJAMIN, *Deconstruction and Art / The Art of Deconstruction*. In *What is Deconstruction?* Ed. by Christopher NORRIS and Andrew BENJAMIN. Academy Editions, St. Martin Press, London—New York, 1988, p. 37.

considered today, after all our experience in dealing with the overlapping, interpretation and juxtaposition of space, then we need to recognise that we've found a decidedly more fluid way of expressing these concepts."¹¹⁹ In creating a spatial experience of the accumulated pasts in the museum of the *future*, Hadid denounces the guarantees of comfort and familiarity and offers, instead, a physical space laden with anxiety as a place of learning.

There are several examples for more direct, manipulative solutions of architectural spectacularity. Hans Hollein's Parc Européen du Volcanisme built in 2002 in Saint-Ours les Roches, for instance, is a moderately impressive example of the Disney style, the high-tech culture of the entertainment industry. The spatial structure following the tradition of the "architettura parlante," the crater and volcano imitation elicit an open air museum experience. The building of the Kunsthau Graz am Landesmuseum Joanneum Spacelab designed by Cook-Fournier GmbH and inaugurated in 2003 is an even more embarrassing piece. The amorphous turquoise blob of the museum is undoubtedly provocative, but the provocation lacks a direction. In contrast to the truly unparalleled richness of the interior spatial design of Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim, the interior spaces of the building in Graz are far more meagrely than the exterior sight. Also, the provocativeness of the Joanneum Spacelab is more likely to come through in photographs than in the city. Graz apparently needed a spectacle to be mentioned in the cultural news—the building fulfils that function and no more.

The power of the Expressionist tradition is evidenced by the fact that Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, Renzo Piano, Rogers and Coop Himmelb(l)au have virtually become media stars in the past decades. Very few painters or architects achieved popular media attention in the seventies, while "starchitects" have appeared in popular culture with increasing frequency starting with the second half of the nineties.

The general public are less captivated by the buildings and architects of Minimalism and Classicism, the other trend running in parallel with the Deconstructivist, Expressionist tradition; part of the reason is that a large proportion of these works are situated in spaces *far away* from metropolises. These buildings do not need to meet the kind of

¹¹⁹ *Museums in the 21st Century*. Op. cit., p. 122.

expectations raised for the Guggenheim Bilbao. Herzog and De Meuron's museum in Munich (with its Goetz collection; 1989–1992); Tadao Ando's Benesse House for Contemporary Art on the island of Naoshima (1988–1992) and, not far from that, his Chichu Art Museum (2000–2004); Peter Zumthor's Kunsthhaus in Bregenz (1997); Shigeru Ban's Paper Museum in Shizuoka (2002); the DIA building in Beacon designed by Robert Irwin and an architectural firm called OpenOffice Art+Architecture Collaborative (2003); Takaharu and Yui Tezuka's building of the Echigo-Matsunoyama Museum of Natural Science (2003) which is located in an area covered by snow for most of the year; these museums are situated in different environments but all of them are distant from the megapolises in the global media space.

Peter Zumthor's Kunsthhaus Bregenz, by the city theatre near Lake Constance, features two geometric blocks. The larger one houses exhibitions and the smaller one has the library, offices, the museum shop and a cafe in it. The separation of administrative and commercial functions from the space of art representation accentuates the independent spirit of contemporary art. The exhibition space is a single cube covered in misty glass shingles; the other rectangular block is cased in black steel. Notwithstanding their minimalist character, the surfaces covered in hazy glass panels prove to be a remarkably effective medium: an urban screen. In daylight, the building—looked at from close, from the direction of the lake—can virtually disappear, dissolve in the blue sky and lose all its material character; at night, the viewer is captivated by the dreamlike sight of the cube often used as a screen refracting a multitude of colours, sometimes carrying abstract compositions and at other times turning into an artwork in itself. Zumthor radically disconnected the exhibition spaces from the external view of the building—the former of which strictly conform to the “white cube” tradition. The transparency of the building and the closed interior raise several aesthetic and art theoretical questions. The relationship between the exhibition spaces and the architectural configuration is a radical step: it is an intent of re-canonizing art. Zumthor's architecture does not interfere with the process of perceiving art—which is done with a captivating force by Hadid, Himmelb(l)au, Gehry and Libeskind, for instance. The Kunsthhaus invites a quiet and unhurried approach from the outside. The temple of contemporary art is not a postmodern plaza: cafe life, the hit of the tourist season, takes place outside of the building, although within its sphere of attraction.

After entering the street level glass door of the Kunsthaus, the visitor walks along a claustrophobically narrow glass covered staircase and enters the secluded exhibition space. Zumthor, the architect, stops at this point; from here on, his greatest merit is that he disappears, becomes invisible. The collective experience of transparency and seclusion represent a philosophy very much unlike the fashionable confessions of the spectaculum society. The radical separation of the exterior and the interior draws attention to the key issue of late modern contemporary art: the significance of the choice and creation of context. Rosalind Krauss notes that minimal art defines itself in the changing contexts rather than in permanent works. Zumthor's museum contributes to this theoretical debate in its own way: it declares that the existence and presence of contemporary art would become unperceivable without its isolation.

The Kunsthaus hosted Rachel Whiteread's works in 2005; the structures of the English Minimalist artist had a special impact in this abstract space and in some sense reinforced Zumthor's statement. Whiteread's work centres around architecture, the decay of buildings and the process of them turning into memorials; in other words, its object is its context. This tension was characteristic of her *House*, a memorial to Judenplatz in Vienna, which was erected in East London in 1993 and later demolished, as well as of her installations displayed in museums and exhibition spaces. Whiteread makes plaster casts of various architectural elements, doors, staircases and building details. The homogenous medium of the life-size plaster casts and the rich light and shadow structure of the surfaces bring the peculiar duality of decay and redemption to life. From this point of view, Whiteread's building sculptures are the faithful peers of buildings that have become sculptures and—in contrast to the architecture of spectacularity—the constructions and artificial places created by her are almost always ghostly. Whiteread accommodated the key issue Zumthor had raised: the relationship between the architectural environment and contemporary art in a media space where it is almost exclusively commercial tools which can succeed in arousing interest.

The blind, life-size sculpture—the copy of an existent building that once stood in an urban context—standing in the closed space of the Kunsthaus, in the isolation of the “white cube” employs Minimalist radicalism in its representation of the unintended memorial. Whiteread refers to the ghostly scenes of amnesic contemporary societies, to the past that constantly keeps popping up out of every corner.

Minimalist late modern museum buildings located away from global metropolises are characterised by the dominance of media representation. Several museums designed by Shigeru Ban, Tadao Ando or the Tezukas owe part of their reputation to the reproduction culture. Both trends—the museums of spectacularity and those of seclusion—may be influential without personal experience. Malraux's Museum without Walls, the virtual milieu, has sooner or later caught up with museums.

Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset's work of a construction half-buried in the ground, *Powerless Structures—Traces of a Never Existing History*, Figure 222, which was presented at the Istanbul Biennale, is a memorial to modern art in a literal (as intended by the artist) and also in an extended (as understood by the perceiver) sense. Because, as demonstrated by the history and afterlife of MoMA and the Guggenheim: the abstract space that made universal aesthetics valid and where the cult of modern art was valid has come to an end. This cult was based on the unstoppable advance of the new between the "yet" and the "already," the co-ordinates of global synchronicity. The space of the art of Modernism bore shaded as well as bright spots depending on how much different places yielded to "the word of the times." The idea of modern art could be stolen again and again because no-one raised doubts about the existence of their shared universe. Geographical distance went on shrinking and, as a consequence, the gap between temporal horizons steadily narrowed for modern theories of art: the contemporary world progressed according to the same chronology.

The universal aesthetics, the conceptions of the space of abstraction and the social time of synchrony have, however, been shaken and re-written by recent criticism raised by social science. The uniform framework of time and space provided the guarantee for the cultural logic of the political and cultural cold war: imaginary and real opponents agreed on the time and place of fighting the next battle of the representation of progress. Modern art movements anticipated and maintained this spirit: the avant-garde enthusiasm for discovery—even in very abstract cases, such as Duchamp's—rested on the conviction that Rio de Janeiro and Paris lived in the same co-ordinate system. The spirit of modern art was the means of portraying the universal certainty of progress. The individual trends and movements—as shown by Barr's "Torpedo Diagram"—steadily headed in the *same* imaginary direction: modern art to the new society. Every movement, every great

artist took a step forward on the same map. The control over the society and the soul, the discovery of the body and the spirit—the most diverse kinds of knowledge were arranged repeatedly in uniform lines. The heroes of the vanguard of progress searched for each other's traces in unknown lands. Rimbaud stood at a spot of the same virtual world where T. S. Eliot and Ginsberg would in their turn. That is how the modern artist came to be an authentic witness to the universal age, and the modern artwork came to be an irreplaceable document to the historical age in which it was created, in the spirit of individuality and originality.

And the modern museum is the place where the individual documents of the virtual story of the universal aesthetics are kept and displayed. The contemporary feeling remains a link even between opposing worlds. Aesthetic theories concerned with Modernism and critical theory itself emerged at the time of the Soviet Union, the intellectual appraisal of which constantly changed over the course of its history, both in terms of current politics and utopian criticism. One of the reasons why MoMA, the Guggenheim, the Beabourg and then the Guggenheim Bilbao split up into different stories is that 1989, when the psycho-geography of the cultural cold war was terminated, meant a sharp turn with respect to the "museum age" as well. The previous co-ordinate system—the continual mirror experience, the model of double existence, keeping up and falling back—was replaced by the age of asynchrony and global swirl. Avant-garde aesthetic theories—and those denying them—were never before independent of the "great theory," the existing anti-capitalist world; of the fact that there were first one and then more states which gave an answer to modernity which differed from the one offered by the various capitalisms of the age.

The future of the movements of Dadaism, Constructivism, Bauhaus, Surrealism and Situationism was dependent on the momentary freedom of the political left in the West and on the state of the movements on the opposing side of the political scene. With the history of the political race excluded, the history of modern art can only be reproduced formally, as we have seen in connection with the debates between Barr and Schapiro at one end and Greenberg at the other, the differing views of Harvard and "the intellectual circles of New York." The debate between Zhdanov and Trotsky at one end and Greenberg at the other did not revolve around the question whether

modern art was part of class struggle but rather the question of *how* it was part of it; avant-garde Marxism, the anti-Stalinist faction, was not keen on the strategy of direct representation. The reality of a political connection between the age and the artworks, a correlation between the manifestations of self-awareness and class awareness was not disputed by anyone.

The aesthetic, critical theory was historicised after 1989, it has lost the background that would guarantee its relevance. The time is over when critical theory was a battle problem and artists were struck by the realisation at the most unexpected moments that there was no innocent rhythm, spot, rhyme or beat. Music, prose, a picture frame, or perspective: anything had the potential of being a relevant question in the great dichotomy. It was a strategic question *who* Pollock belonged to—just as Ady in Hungary. The prestige of aesthetics and critical theories was guaranteed by the world political context.

If all that was art world, it ended in 1989. From then on, contemporary art and modern art have been left to themselves; they have become historicised just as the theories. If no threat is posed by the practices of another society behind the images of the utopia, the artwork will be treated the same way as the practices of the other society: sent to a museum, displayed in the New York Public Library as an exhibit. The analysis, the archaeology of the political context of the aesthetic discourse comes from the recognition that as the utopia becomes a museum piece, so do the connotative issues relevant to art disappear—with the arguments in favour of elite culture being the first to go. The Guggenheim Bilbao and the Louvre courtyard in Paris, the Museum Quartier versus the Natur- and Kunsthistorisches Museums in Vienna are instances of acknowledging this turn and translating it into heterotopias. The utopia and critical theory always had a glistening or shady hope of redemption sneaking behind them: several modern artworks gain their aesthetic authenticity from the hope of redemption by society in this world.

“The time has come”: the system of the uniform universal social space and chronology has dissipated; the restructuring of urban experience networks and, with it, the radical criticism of the determining force of the place have begun. The single history of art, the *Ars Una*, is replaced by the canons of various kinds of art, which often ignore each other altogether. The rivalry of local chronologies was assigned a new, this time threatening meaning after September 11, 2001: the

World Trade Centre, an institution—while I do not wish to mythologize—representing the universes of time and space, was annihilated in this action. The two buildings—abounding in meaning both in their function and in their architectural structure—which did not only reign over New York.

The time and place needed for critical theory have disappeared by now. There is no opponent, there are no divided grounds, no fronts. A metamorphosis of scales and changes of scale is taking place; and no consensus is perceptible anywhere on the horizon which could allow the different contemporary art movements, events, biennials and triennials to use maps of the same scale. There are no signs of abstraction necessary for critical aesthetic theory. What is left is: case studies, aesthetic micro-historiography, diaries of case studies, explicit descriptions—such as this one here.

Museums with the function of presenting contemporary art, the Kunsthau, Kunsthalle, Biennale and others, the ever more complex infrastructure—past and in opposition to the art world that assigned a leading role to the galleries of the eighties—suggest that an increasing amount of money is needed for appearing in virtual media and cultural spaces. An increasingly large logistic apparatus has to be set in motion, the components of which are not related to each other in the traditional aesthetic, art historical sense of the word.

William Kentridge's "Gesamtkunstwerk" work is an apt example of the operation of this complex network of connections. Aesthetic realism, multimedia show, displacement, museum and theatre are all together. And as a contemporary alternative, we have media hacker art: Banksy and, through him, the apotheosis of street art, podcasting, that is, the populous army of people constantly reusing, rewriting, rereading the museum, urban spaces, music and texts, the impromptu artists creating multimedia montages.

As I write this chapter—in January 2007, in 15 degrees centigrade above zero and blazing sunshine—the interpretation of the extraordinary success of YouTube has commenced all around the world. The immense audio-visual archive that came into being in a matter of moments indicates that taxonomy—collections established and arranged in line with philosophical considerations, including museums—has no choice but to live together with encyclopaedias arranged according to "folksonomy," that is, *ad hoc* categories, classification principles created by the users. As if we were looking at Borges' Chinese encyclo-

paedia—now in contemporary cultural practice. Technology provides a means of establishing a communication framework—but it is not a reason for comparability. The system of comparison has been replaced by the experience of the communication—based on unstable power relations—of worlds evolving according to autonomous standards. The global media space creates and demands hitherto unknown forms of dialogue between local arts. The inevitability of the virtual world, the “always on” communication, leads to a radical reassessment of the meaning of the place. The collapse of traditional scales, the classic forms of the distinction between provincial versus cosmopolitan urban cultures are either invalid or have been restructured. The pathos model of the *forerunner*, the avant-garde artist, has been replaced by the character of the archivist-artist rummaging in the lumber room of various forgotten pasts. Collection is not a question of individual glory, however, but an opportunity for discovery, the spiritual pleasure of sharing. The new generation of contemporary art and culture does not appear to be at home in the liberal postmodern world that emerged after 1989. The new fashion: the *Zeitgeist*, the demiurge of social responsibility may bring great surprises.

What the future of contemporary art will look like remains a secret indeed for the present.

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